

General Advantages and Disadvantages of Castration

Advantages

There are a number of benefits to castration of bull calves. These include:

- Lowering testosterone levels and preventing production of semen,
- modifying carcass characteristics by decreasing the number of animals with a high muscle pH (“dark cutters”); thus increasing meat quality
- creating a more docile animal for draft purposes
- decreasing costs associated with aggressive, destructive bull behavior
- Castrated calves typically fetch higher prices at auction than intact bull calves because castrated calves are easier and safer to handle.

Disadvantages

Castration inflicts pain on the animal and causes a period of slow growth rate and poorer feed efficiency. Intact male cattle (bulls) tend to produce lower quality grade, less consistent, less marbled, and less tender meat. In addition, carcasses from bulls command lower prices at market when compared with carcasses from steers.

Specific Advantages and Disadvantages of Types of Castration

Elastic Band Castration

Advantages

- bloodless, easy to perform
- newest versions of banders for older calves adjust the latex bands to correct tension
- preferred for castrating at a wet, muddy feedlot

Disadvantages

- infections, including tetanus and blackleg, may warrant vaccination prior to banding
- public concern about pain and animal welfare associated with banding older calves
- lower weight gains following latex-band castration compared to surgical castration
- EZE and Callicrate methods without anaesthesia for older bulls deemed inhumane and unethical
- large lesions may form above the band site and persist for long times, making latex bands inappropriate for yearling cattle

wounds heal more slowly than those from surgical castration

Burdizzo Emasculator Castration

Advantages

- Bloodless
- less reduction in weight gain after castration compared to surgical or latex-band

Disadvantages

- slow to perform and requires expertise
- unreliable when done incorrectly, leads to stags
- equipment becomes ineffective after long-term use and must be replaced

Surgical Castration

Advantages

- sure castration because the testicles are removed
- more time to perform than banding

- surgical wounds heal more quickly than those from rubber ring

Disadvantages

- not bloodless, bleeding is a risk
- risk of infections because of open wounds
- not recommended for castrating bull calves at a feedlot with wet, muddy conditions
- greater reduction in weight gain after castration compared to Burdizzo
- risk of injury to the surgeon