



BANDING CASTRATION FACT SHEET

A Fact Sheet for the Canadian Beef Industry

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Purpose of Castration

The purpose of castration is to stop the production of male hormones by removing or destroying the testicles. Methods currently practiced in Canada include bloodless or surgical castration. Benefits of castration include:

- Prevention of unwanted breeding
- Prevention of mounting of cattle, which can cause injury, resulting in “dark cutters”
- Decreased aggression to other cattle and farm personnel
- Improved meat quality
- Premium from markets for steers [1]

Age to Castrate

All methods of castration are stressful and painful. However, castrating at an early age minimizes such factors. Studies have found that weight loss associated with castration increases as the age at time of castration increases [2]. The National Farm Animal Care Council (**NFACC**) does not recommend castration during weaning, due to the stress that the calf is already experiencing [3].

One study found that calves castrated prior to weaning had increased feed intake and average daily weight gain in comparison to calves castrated at weaning [2, 4]. To determine the best time to castrate for each technique, consult with your veterinarian.

Banding

Banding is a bloodless method of castration. The band is used to stop the blood supply to the testicles. Make sure that the bands used are purchased within the last year, as older bands may break prematurely.

Calves less than 3 weeks old can be banded with elastic bands and an Elastrator. Older calves should be banded with latex rings and the Callicrate or EZE tool, as the use of elastic bands increases the risk of infection in older calves [5].

Banding is best performed with the calf standing and an assistant performing a tail-jack. Make sure that both testicles have descended into the scrotum. If they have not, record the calf's number and have your veterinarian check at a later date.

Pull both testicles to the bottom of the scrotum. Open the Elastrator with the prongs pointed towards the calf's belly. Stretch the band open and place the band about 0.5cm above the testicles, as shown in Figure 1 [5].

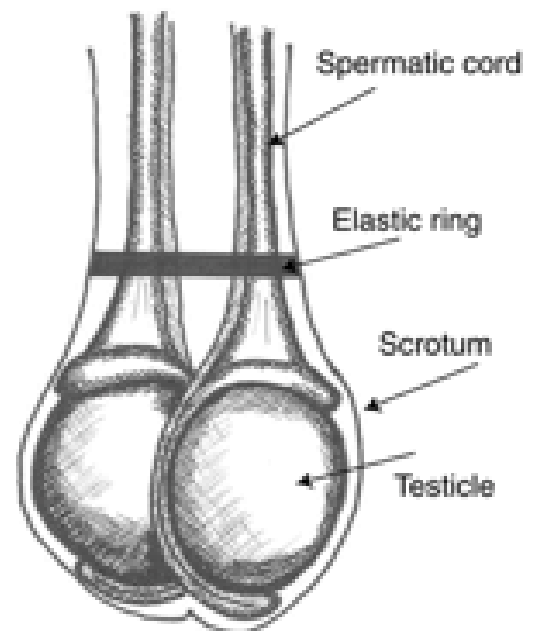


Figure 1: Appropriate placement of the band [5].

Before releasing the calf make sure that both testicles are caught under the band, if not, cut the band and try again. Monitor the calves for foul-smelling discharge and ensure that they continue to eat and drink. A disadvantage of banding is the increased risk of infections, therefore, when banding bulls greater than 180kg (400lbs), a current tetanus and blackleg vaccine is recommended [3].

Pain

All methods of castration cause pain, but castrating at an earlier age has shown to lessen the amount of pain [1]. Indicators of pain include:

- Tail swishing
- Stomping feet
- Head turning
- Abnormal wide stance
- Abnormal gait
- Reduced activity level
- Reduced interest in feed and/or water

As banding is a method of castration that works by cutting off the blood supply to the testicles, the pain is delayed and signs of pain may not be seen for immediately after band placement and can last for weeks after banding. Work with your local veterinarian to plan an appropriate castration protocol for your operation.

For Your Information



Code of Practice Requirements

- **Effective January 1, 2016:**
Use pain control, in consultation with your veterinarian, when castrating bulls older than 9 months of age.

- **Effective January 1, 2018:**
Use pain control, in consultation with your veterinarian, when castrating bulls older than 6 months of age.

Acknowledgement

Gerrit Rietvelf, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs, Animal Care Specialist, drew the figure used in this fact sheet.

References:

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2. Bretschneider, G. 2005. Effects of age and method of castration on performance and stress response of beef cattle: A review. *Livest Prod Sci.* 97(2-3): p. 89-100.
3. National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC). 2013. Code of practice: for the care and handling of beef cattle. Available at: http://www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/beef_code_of_practice.pdf Accessed: 08/29/14. *J Anim Sci.* 90(7): p. 2345-2352.
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