**When should castration be done?**



**Castration Age:**

Client Communication: Castration at a young age minimizes hazards to the calf, the cow-calf producer and the feedlot owner. Hazards for calves and owners include:

* sickness or death of calves following castration at an older age
* decreased live weight gains (productivity) in the weeks following castration of older calves

Many producers choose to castrate new-born calves because:

* techniques are easier for the operator
* castration is less stressful on new-born calves
* concerns for animal welfare related to castrating older calves

Although there is no evidence that pain differs between young and older calves, there is less risk with castration of young calves.



**Testosterone Effect:**

Some producers delay castration to take advantage of the growth effects of the male hormone testosterone. Testosterone secretion commences between 3.5 and 5.5 months. The differences in live weight gain of castrates and bulls are first apparent at four to five months.

**Liveweight Gains:**

Studies of the effects of castration on live weight gains have been reported from many countries. In general, there are no differences in live weight gains for bulls and steers in the 21 days following castration at one month of age. However, there are significant differences with castration at older ages. During the 1980s and early 1990s, research focused on methods to recover weight lost by use of hormonal implants. In the past decade or so, research seems to focus on alleviation of pain and animal welfare issues associated with castration.