**Should unwanted roosters be euthanized or maybe used for capon production ?**

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Today chicken management is highly specialized and directed towards meat and egg production. Chicks of both sexes (meat breeds) are used for meat production, whereas egg production is based upon pullet chicks. The elimination of unwanted day-old cockerel-chicks poses a problem for poultry industry. Several solutions have been proposed, including the development of reliable and rapid methods for sexing chick embryos, and effective and humanitarian euthanasia of male chicks. However, social concerns and expectations should also be taken into account. Raising unwanted cockerels for meat is the approach that has met with the highest degree of social acceptance. Howeover, changes on testosterone concentration with age affect the behavior of roosters. Antagonistic and/or aggressive behaviors can be eliminated by surgical or chemical castration.

The aim of this study was to determine testosterone levels in Rhode Island Red (RIR) roosters and capons and to perform an objective evaluation of slaughter traits.

The experimental materials comprised 200 RIR roosters. At 8 weeks of age, 100 birds were subjected to surgical castration. From 12 wk of age to 28 wk, at 4-wk intervals, 8 intact cockerels and 8 capons were selected randomly and slaughtered. The data were analyzed by two-way ANOVA.

In RIR roosters, blood testosterone concentrations were found to increase until 20 weeks of age (from 0.15 ng/ml in week 4 to 1.86 ng/ml in week 20, P <0.05). At 20 to 28 weeks of age, the average blood testosterone concentrations was similar (P>0.05). In capons, testosterone levels remained at 0.12 ng/ml to 0.40 ng/ml until the end of the rearing period. Caponization had no significant effect on body weight or carcass weight, which were affected by age (P < 0.05).

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