CALVING FIRST AID REFRESHER

With the new season’s calves starting to make an appearance we thought it would be timely to revisit the physiology of the calving process and the common reasons why interventions may be required.

As with any medical emergency, the success of calving first aid is highly dependent on prompt and effective action.

There are also some handy hints that can make the job a lot easier and result in fewer adverse outcomes.

Timing of a normal calving:
By knowing the normal sequence of events we can recognise when a cow requires assistance.

Within 24-48 hours of calving, the cow or heifer becomes restless, agitated and stands away from the herd. The cervix begins to open to allow the calving to proceed. This is referred to as the 1st stage of labour.

At the end of the 1st stage of labour a bluish white fluid filled bubble like bag appears at the vulva. The cow’s contractions force the calf through the water bag.

In a normal presentation the head and forelimbs then chest and finally hips are pushed through. A cow may take from 30min to 3 hours to deliver a calf. The membranes that surrounded the calf are normally expelled within 30 minutes to 8 hours of calving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parturition stage</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Intervention criteria</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Stage 1 (Preparatory) | 2 to 8 hours | • Cervical dilation  
• Fetal positioning  
• Fetus enters birth canal | Stage 1 longer than 6 hours |
| Stage 2 (Delivery) | 30 min. to 6 hours | Fetus expelled | • Water bag observed for 1 hour or longer and no calf  
• Straining for 30 min. or longer and no progress  
• Stopping to rest for 1 hour or more and no progress |
| Stage 3 (Membrane expulsion) | 30 min. to 8 hours | Placenta expelled | Placenta retained more than 12 hours |

Assistance is required when
1. The cow has been constantly straining or agitated for more than 6 hours without the water bag being presented.
2. The water bag has been present for more than 2 hours without a calf being passed.
3. You are unable to determine position or unable to correct calf position or if calf head and feet won’t fit in the pelvis at the same time. Lubrication, lubrication...if you are going to attempt to calve a cow make sure you are clean and use plenty of lubricant over your arms and in the cow (2-5 litres minimum). This will help prevent damage to the lining of the cow and also reduce damage to your skin.
4. No progress is made within 15 min of trying to assist a cow to pass the calf.
5. The cow appears distressed, bloated, and unable to stand.

Contact Information:
Wollaston Clinic, 59 Mortlake Rd, Warrnambool, Phone: 03 5561 6911
Timboon Clinic, 99 Bailey St, Timboon, Phone: 03 5558 6666
Allansford Clinic, 260 Ziegler Parade, Allansford, Phone: 03 5558 6666
Simpson Clinic, 294 Barramul St, Simpson, Phone: 03 5558 6666

Call Farm Services: 1300 838 700 or send a message to email@thevetgroup.com.au
Workshop

CalfWise Workshops focus on practical ways to achieve optimum calf health and present you with the latest information on calf rearing relevant to South West Victoria.

CalfWise Workshops are led by experienced vets with a special interest in calf rearing.

You will come away with...
1. A thorough understanding of the biology of calf immunity and infection.
2. The ability to recognise and measure disease occurrence and know which triggers mean a change of action is necessary.
3. Practical advice regarding disease prevention from pre-calving decisions through weaning.
4. A farm-specific action plan to achieve the best possible outcome for both calves and farmers.

Workshop details:
The workshops are run over two days with lunch included.

Dates:
Allansford: Tuesday 10 and Thursday 12 April at the Junction Hotel
Timboon: Monday 16th and Wednesday 18th April at Timboon Conference Room.

Time:
10:00am – 2:00pm (both days)

Venue:
The Vet Group
Conference Room
99 Bailey Street Timboon

Cost:
$200 per person
Book Early!
Limited places available

Email: events@thevetgroup.com.au
Phone: 1300 838 700

HeiferWise Workshop

HeiferWise follows on from The Vet Group’s very successful CalfWise program. HeiferWise is a growth and health program that makes your heifer rearing easy and efficient from weaning through to calving. The program aims to make heifer rearing an efficient, rewarding and profitable element of your farming practice.

The workshop will help you:
• Proactively monitor your heifers’ progress measured by regular weighing and assessment
• Know what is needed in nutritional requirements of heifers at different stages of their growth to achieve targets
• Understand the labour and infrastructure requirements needed to achieve these targets
• Have a comprehensive understanding of common diseases encountered
• Know how to actively monitor health and strategies to maintain good health (including vaccination and drenching recommendations)
• Understand joining programs and considerations
• Understand transition management

Workshop details:
Day 1
Tuesday, 10th March 2018
10am - 2pm
Timboon Clinic Conference room (lunch provided)
• Understanding heifer growth and health

Homework
Weighing appointment between Day 1 and Day 2
• Collect faecal samples 10 days before weigh day and deliver to clinic within 24 hours of collection
• Weigh heifers
• Deliver data (heifer ID’s, birth date, weight and weigh date)

Day 2
Thursday, 24th April 2018
10am - 2pm
Morning session: Farm visit
• Discuss practicality of feeding heifers
Afternoon session: Timboon Clinic Conference room (lunch provided)
• Analyse heifer weight report

Leptospirosis: A double threat

Protecting your family, staff and valuable stock are critical reasons to include 7in1 vaccination in your herd health program.

Leptospirosis can be a devastating disease in herds and in people. In cattle, it can give rise to a number of syndromes including mastitis and abortions in mature cows, and severe, often fatal disease in calves. It is also a zoonotic disease, which means it can infect people, and can cause severe ongoing health consequences. It can easily be prevented by vaccinating the herd for less than $2 per cow. Most calves get their initial booster injections, but we find this is seldom followed up with 12 monthly boosters in the adult herd as recommended. Leptospirosis is a bacterium that persists in the kidneys of infected animals. It is shed in urine which is a source of infection for other animals and humans. It can survive in wet environments including stagnant water, effluent and wet soil. There are many different strains of leptospirosis which persist in a variety of animals. Pigs, cows and rodents can all be hosts. Strains that cause mild disease in the host animal can go on to cause severe disease in a different species.
Disease in cattle

There are 2 main strains of Leptospriosis that infect cattle. Leptospirosis Hardjobovis is a cow adapted strain which causes less severe signs in cattle, while Leptospirosis Pomona normally resides in pigs and can cause more severe disease when cattle are infected.

Signs of infection with leptospirosis include mastitis in all four quarters, with milk appearing thick and colostrum like and/or blood tinged, with small clots and an associated increase in ICC. Unlike most other cases of mastitis there is no inflammation of the udder, and the udder appears limp ‘flabby bag’.

A concurrent drop in milk production lasting 2-10 days is also prominent. Abortion and stillborn or weak and premature calves are also a manifestation of the disease.

In both Hardjobovis and Pomona strains, abortion commonly occurs 6 to 12 weeks after the initial infection, usually from 4 to 7 months gestation. Diagnosis can be difficult and time consuming and involves taking paired blood samples from affected animals to monitor rising antibody levels, and also post mortem examination of affected calves or fetuses.

Calves infected with Leptospirosis Pomona have severe disease: the bacteria localize in the kidneys, resulting in ‘redwater’ (red urine), and is usually fatal. Calves can also be infected with a different strain of leptospirosis contracted from rats, which infect calves by urinating in feed and water sources.

Disease in humans

People are infected by contact with urine from affected cows or calves. Leptospirosis can enter the body through cuts in the skin, or via contact with mucous membranes of the mouth or eye. Infection can be as simple as a drop of urine landing on a persons eye – a commonplace occurrence in many dairies, or through assisting cows during the calving process. Contact with aborted and sick calves or foetal membranes are also possible methods of transmission.

Initial signs of infection with Leptospirosis are flu like symptoms: fever, chills, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, headache, photophobia (fear of light), and muscle aches.

There may be an apparent recovery, however this is often followed by a relapse. Up to 10% of infections can progress to Weils disease, a very serious form of leptospirosis involving liver failure, kidney failure, meningitis and hemorrhage. Prolonged periods of convalescence and inability to work are commonplace.

Treatment requires diagnosis and antibiotic therapy, but this must be given in the early stages of infection. Hospitalisation may be necessary and some cases are even fatal. Recovery can be slow, and chronic fatigue like symptoms can last for months, also persistent headaches or chronic inflammation of the eye can occur. It is simply not worth putting yourself, your employees and your family at risk of contracting leptospirosis when a simple and effective preventative strategy can be put in place.

Prevention:

The 2 main strains of Leptospirosis encountered in dairy cattle are included in the 7 in 1 vaccine. Dairy cattle should receive an initial injection program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calves</th>
<th>6 weeks</th>
<th>12 weeks</th>
<th>Annually</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previously unvaccinated cattle</td>
<td>From 6 weeks</td>
<td>4-6 weeks later</td>
<td>Annually</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lepto can be a devastating disease in people, including your family, staff, service providers and others

Outbreaks in cattle do occur, with substantial economic consequences

The disease is very preventable through a lifelong vaccination program

Failing to vaccinate is a serious risk you should avoid

Initially unvaccinated cows should also receive an initial injection and booster. The time of the annual booster can be at a convenient time, ie when all cows are milking or at dry off. Other ways to prevent exposure when handling animals include:

- Wear milking gloves in the dairy
- Cover all cuts and abrasions with a waterproof dressing
- Wear gloves when handling membranes or stillborn or aborted calves
- Be extremely cautious when handling sick calves with red urine
- Wash and dry hands and boots after working with cattle and calves

Easter Hours

Please note the following changes to our normal trading hours over the holiday period.

Good Friday: 30th March
All Clinics Closed
Emergency on call only

Easter Saturday: 31st March
Timboon - 9am to 12pm
Wollaston - 9am to 12pm
Allansford - Closed
Simpson - Closed

Easter Sunday: 1st April
All Clinics Closed
Emergency on call only

Easter Monday: 2nd April
All Clinics Closed
Emergency on call only

Our usual 24 hour emergency service will be available outside normal office hours and on public holidays. If you require emergency care during this time contact us on:

Farm Services: 1300 838 700
Small animals Timboon: 55586666
Small animals Allansford and Wollaston: 55616911

facebook.com/thevtgroup.dairy.farm
instagram.com/thevtgroupdairyfarm
Calving tips

- Have plenty of water containing disinfectant – wash the vulva prior to commencement and make sure your arms are clean. Wear rectal gloves when possible. Wash regularly during the process.
- Use copious amounts of lubricant – by copious we mean 2-5 litres. Lubricant is relatively cheap, and makes the entire process much much easier. Distribute the lubricant broadly within the vagina and uterus.
- Apply chains or straps appropriately to the legs of the calf. Chains should be positioned as illustrated using half hitches, to distribute the force across multiple joints of the leg.
- Use pulling devices where you can carefully control the force or remove the force at an instant if the cows starts to sit. Vets tend to use calving pulleys, alternatives include calving jacks. Motorbikes or wirestrainers are not recommended.
- Always check for a second calf no matter how large the first calf appears – vet calls in subsequent days to remove a rotten calf are not uncommon.
- Work with the cows contractions, don’t rush.
- If using a head snare, be careful to apply it correctly, and be careful of the force you apply.

Once you have decided to call for assistance it is best to leave the cow in a comfortable position and to stop trying to calve the cow. Continuing to attempt to manipulate the calf is likely make the situation more difficult for the vet due to inflammation and possible damage to reproductive tract. If you have time (whilst waiting for the vet to arrive), provide the cow with water to drink, to maintain her hydration; have a snack and a drink to maintain your energy/hydration and get 10 litres of fresh warm water for the vet (to keep gear clean –not for hydration!). Do not administer oxytocin prior to the arrival of the vet.

If you think a cow is calved but you are unable to find the calf in the paddock always check inside the cow. This is the most common place to find a missing calf.

Calving Kit Essentials

It may sounds like common sense, but having the right equipment stored in a complete kit can make the job of calving a cow so much easier. We recommend the following items, and it pays to purchase quality equipment that won’t let you down and that will last the test of time. It pays for itself easily if you save a couple of calves or a single cow. More details are available at shop.thevetgroup.com.au

- Two clean buckets of warm water
- Jug
- Mild liquid soap
- Disinfectant (e.g. chlorhexidine)
- Paper towels
- Obstetrical lubricant
- Calving chains of variable lengths
- Calving rope/head snare
- Calving handles
- Obstetric gloves
- Calving jack or pulley (experienced personnel only)
- Resuscitator
- 7% iodine for calf navel
- Notepad to record calf details and reasons for the calving problem.

A note on the Prolapsed Uterus:

After a calving the cow may continue to strain (uterus) so much that she forces her breeding bag to be pushed inside out. This is often associated with low blood calcium levels and on-going contractions. Place a clean wet towel over the uterus to protect it from further damage. CALL YOUR VET IMMEDIATELY – the quicker this post calving problem is attended to, the better the cow’s chance of survival.