

# Calving

Calving is a continuous event but for explanation it is divided into 3 stages

## 1. FIRST STAGE

- Uterus starts contracting.
- Cervix dilates.
- Restlessness (heifers 1 - 24 hours).
- Water bag is presented through the cervix.

## 2. SECOND STAGE

- Foetus is pushed into the birth canal.
- Water bag ruptures.
- Adults usually take ½ -1 hour.
- Heifers up to 3 hours.
- Stage of active straining to expel calf



## 3. THIRD STAGE

- Membranes are expelled and uterine contraction.
- Usually takes 1/2 - 8 hours.
- If you have assisted the cow, inject oxytocin to promote cleanings being expelled and reduce the risk of RFM.

**Intervention is needed if any of the following occur:**

- If the water sac has been visible for 2 hours and you have not seen any progression (the cow is not trying).
- If the cow has been trying for over 30 minutes and making no progress.
- If the cow has quit trying for more than a 15-20 minute period of time after a period of progress. Rest periods normally should not last longer than 5-10 minutes.
- If the cow or calf is showing signs of stress or fatigue -- like a swollen tongue in the calf, yellow staining (meconium) of the foetus.

**DO NOT LEAVE TOO LONG!!**

**Especially this season, be on the look out for thin cows that do not have sufficient energy reserves to push a calf out. If in doubt, CHECK!**

With some problems (e.g. breech, twins, twisted wombs) the cow may be seen to start calving and then stop - don't leave till the next day!!

## CHECKING THE CALVING COW

- Bring into the shed, either the vet race or the herring bone. If the cow is likely to go down make sure she can get up easily from where you are examining her.
- Wash off any muck around the vulva before putting your hand in - cleanliness is very important. Use warm water with antiseptic. Use plenty of lubricant.

**Rule 1:** If you put your hand in and don't know what is going on straight away –call the vet.

**Rule 2:** If you know the problem and the solution, but know you are unable to handle the problem– call the vet.

**Rule 3:** If you know the problem and the solution, but you haven't got it out in 30 mins, call the vet. Delays may adversely affect the cow and/or calf.

Once you have calved the cow, **always** put your hand back in to check for any damage to the cow and check to make sure there aren't twins. Inject oxytocin to help expel the membranes, mark cow down on at risk list for treatment in 14 days. Dose the cow with starter drench, and inject B12 to stimulate appetite.

There is no benefit in allowing the cow to lick the calf. It is much better to not let the bond form between the cow and calf, so the cow can focus on eating.

Spray the navel of the calf with iodine and ensure the calf receives 10% of its bodyweight in fresh first milk colostrum.