

The Calving Process

Stage 1: Preparation (2-6 hours)

The signs of stage one preparation are:

- **Restlessness**
- **Raising her tail**
- **Separating herself from the herd, if she can. In addition, you may see a**
- **Mucous discharge**
- **Mild straining**
- **Fetal membranes, or the water bag.**

During this time the cervix is dilating and the calf is rotating from its position in pregnancy to the calf facing forward with its head at 12 o'clock resting between its front legs. Any other position or presentation is not normal.

Stage 2: Expulsion (30 minutes – 4 hours)

The second stage is expulsion. The walls of the uterus are contracting more frequently and with more force. **We will see feet protruding from the vulva.**

When a cow enters Stage 2 the following steps should be followed:

- **Move cow into freshening pen or pack**
- **Perform a vaginal exam, using the clean procedure, to identify whether the calf is in the correct position**
- **Check on cow every 30 minutes to make sure she is progressing normally. This process usually takes between 30 minutes to 2 hours, but no more than 4 hours**

Remember: that if you are pulling a calf you should always have **two feet and a head through the cervix or two feet and a tail before you pull.** Otherwise don't pull before you reposition the calf in a normal presentation, or call your vet for help or advice.

Stage 3: Cleaning (8-12 hours)

The third stage is cleaning. At this time the placenta is passed after the calf is born.