

BE PREPARED

- Supplies to have on hand
 - Gloves and OB sleeves
 - OB lubricants
 - 7% iodine solution or Chlorhexidine solution
 - Clean Towels
 - Umbilical tape (*string*) or clamps
 - Calcium & magnesium oral supplements
 - **Discuss with your veterinarian which are most appropriate for your operation**
 - Clean and dry calving chains and handles (*if you have experience using them correctly*)
 - Your veterinarian's number in case of emergencies or concerns
- Know which cows are due to calve and when
 - Discuss with your veterinarian options for pregnancy diagnosis in your cattle
- Have a clean calving area
 - Minimum of 10'x10' pen
 - No evidence of manure or cleanings from previous calving
 - Bed deeply with straw
 - **Shavings and sand can be aspirated by the calf or infect the navel, for these reasons they should be avoided as bedding material in calving pen**
- If you know an exact calving date
 - Move cow to a clean calving pen 48 hours prior to due date or when she begins to show signs of stage 1 of labor
- If you do not know an exact calving date
 - Keep cattle that are expected to calve within the month in a pasture or area you can monitor daily
 - Move cow to a clean calving pen or bed pack when she shows signs of stage 1 of labor.

Note: Avoid waiting to move cattle to calving area during Stage 2 of parturition. Any stress during this stage of labor can result in calving problems or harm to the calf.

COW CARE AFTER CALVING

- Ensure that the cow is alert, responsive, and attentive to her calf
- Provide her with clean warm water & fresh hay
- Strip all four quarters to ensure they are patent and colostrum appears normal
- Examine for signs of excessive bleeding, weakness when standing or inability to stand on her own, retained cleanings, lethargy, or inappetence
- Work with your veterinary team to develop protocols for any of the above conditions

WHEN TO CALL THE VET

- If stage 1 is taking longer than 8 hours or if the cow is not progressing every 30 minutes in stage 2
- If you feel the calf is malpositioned and are not sure how to correct it, or if you have attempted to correct a malpositioned calf without success for over 20 minutes
- If the calf is not attempting to stand or nurse within 3 hours of birth
- If the cow is showing any of the signs listed above or not responding to treatment
- If the cow has retained cleanings for more than 3 days
 - DO NOT attempt to pull cleanings on your own without consulting your veterinarian

MANAGEMENT PROTOCOLS TO CONSIDER

All cattle operations are different. Because of this, common practices are not going to look the same from farm to farm. Consult with your veterinary team to develop management protocols that best reflect the goals and health needs of your cattle herd. Additionally, our website has several resources from experts in the field regarding the following topics:

- Calf Nutrition
- Calf-Hood Management
- Cow Nutrition & Body Condition Scoring
- Cow Vaccinations & Deworming
- Cow breeding & Replacement Selection
- Bull Selection & Management



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**WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN
YOU ARE EXPECTING...
A CALF**

STAGES OF 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
- 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. **You will see feet protruding from the vulva.**

- 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.
- If you are not seeing progress every 30 mins, you should perform a vaginal exam, using the clean procedure, to identify whether the calf is in the correct position.

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.

Pro Tip: After the calf is removed, glove up and check for another. You will miss every twin you don't check for!

STAGE 3: CLEANING (8-12 HOURS)

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

ENSURING A GOOD START TO LIFE FOR YOUR CALVES

ENVIRONMENT

Calves should be born in an environment that is clean, dry, and warm. Calves born into a wet, dirty environment will likely develop scours and pneumonia within the first week of life. Do not forget that they are infants and have no immune system when they first hit the ground.

ASSESS THE CALF IMMEDIATELY AT BIRTH

Assess the calf when it has been completely delivered. Check to make sure it is breathing, if not, stick fingers in the nostrils and rub the back of the neck. Make sure calf's umbilicus is not still bleeding. If it is, tie it off with string, use an umbilical clamp, or hold pressure until the bleeding stops.

KEEP THEM WARM

Calves are not able to regulate their body temperatures when they are first born and will very easily become hypothermic. To prevent hypothermia in calves you should:

- Dry the calf off rapidly
 - If the cow is doing a good job of this and the environmental temperature is above 60 degrees, let her continue
 - If the temperature is below 60 degrees or the cow is not cleaning the calf off well, use clean towels to rub the calf off until completely dry
- Provide a deep, dry, clean bed back of straw
 - If below 60 degrees, make sure there are no drafts in area
 - If below freezing, consider warming boxes or space heaters to provide more heat (be considerate of fire hazards)
- Feed colostrum as soon as possible
- Use calf blankets if below freezing

COLOSTRUM

Calves should be fed **4 quarts (1 gallon) of warm colostrum by 4 hours after birth.** The sooner the calf is fed the better. If the calf is not willing to drink on its own, use an esophageal tube feeder to force feed colostrum to the calf.

The calf should receive **at least 2 quarts of warm colostrum during a second feeding around 8-12 hours after birth.** A third feeding can be offered around 18-20 hours after birth, however, this feeding can be skipped if the calf is not willing to drink on its own.

Remember: The antibodies in the colostrum are no longer available to the calf 24 hours after birth. Feeding colostrum to the calf after the first 24 hours of life will have no effect on immune function.

NAVEL CARE

The umbilical cord on the calf should be attended to within the first 30 mins of life.

- Cord length
 - If the cord is longer than 4", tear the extra length with gloved hands OR tie off with string then cut the extra length off below the tie
 - DO NOT CUT with out tying off first
- If the cord is bleeding
 - Use string, an umbilical clamp, or your fingers to hold off until bleeding stops
 - Make sure whatever you are using is clean
- Dip the navel in 7% iodine solution or chlorhexidine solution
 - Fill a cup with solution and submerge the entire navel up to the belly for 15 seconds
 - Make sure to cover the entire cord and navel
 - Repeat every 12 hours for 2 days
- Monitor navel for signs of swelling, discharge, heat, or bleeding
 - If any of these signs occur, contact your vet for advice