

Cattle Calving

The most common reason for calf losses in the cattle industry are calving difficulties, known as dystocia. The duration of the calving varies however, cows should calve in 3 hours or less and heifers can take up to 8 hours.

The 3 stages of calving

Stage 1

Calf positions into the birth canal and the cervix opening- the cow/heifer may pace around and sit down and get back up repeatedly and frequently swish their tail. This process takes approximately 1-4 hours

Stage 2

'Water bag' ruptures- the calf is present in the birth canal and the cow/heifer is actively pushing to deliver the calf- this process takes approximately 1-3 hours for heifers and 30mins-1 hr for cows

** Cows generally calve faster than heifers.*

Stage 3

Passing the placenta (membranes)- this process can take minutes to days to occur.

Common causes of Dystocia are:

- Malpresentation: This is when the calf is in the incorrect position to be delivered normally. This can look like a calf coming with its back legs first, instead of its front legs.
- Maternal-fetal disproportion: This is when the calf is too large to fit through the cow's pelvis. This is most common in first-time calvers.
- Uterine inertia: This describes the uterine muscles or the cow becoming too physically weak to push the calf out.

Fig. 1: Anterior presentation



Fig. 2: Posterior presentation



Fig. 3: Breech presentation



Fig. 4: Two front legs presentation



Be Prepared

- Plastic sleeves/gloves,
- Lube
- Calving chains or straps
- A bucket (for water) and soap or disinfectant

When to call Us

- The calf appears to be breech
- one leg is stuck back & cannot be easily manipulated into the correct position
- the heifer/cow has become weak
- No progression after 1hr
- If two adults cannot easily deliver the calf

Cattle - Prolapse

A prolapse is defined as: the slipping of a body part from its usual position

Uterine prolapse This is when the uterus is completely expelled out behind the cow and can hang down to the hocks when standing. It is the size of a bag of sugar, with lumps all over it and only occurs AFTER calving.

A uterine prolapse is an emergency! Contact us immediately if you suspect a uterine prolapse.

Vaginal prolapse is usually seen in older cows and occurs when the tissue around the birth canal becomes relaxed from 6 months in calf. It is the size of a football, can occur when on heat, 3 days prior to calving and up to 3 days post calving. The increased pressure in the abdominal cavity will push the vagina or rectum out. The bladder can also be trapped in the expelled tissue, preventing the animal from urinating. The vagina must be re-attached to the muscles in the immediate area. Contact us to help with this procedure.

Can you prevent a prolapse?

With vaginal prolapses, it is important not to allow cows to become overly fat during the last trimester of pregnancy. Cull animals that have experienced a vaginal prolapse. Subsequent vaginal prolapses are typically worse than the first. Vaginal prolapses are more common in Bos indicus breeds.

Are there any long-term consequences of a prolapse?

Be aware that cows that have prolapsed have a higher risk of prolapsing again compared to those who have never had this condition. Cull cows that are geriatric as they are predisposed to prolapsing.

Scratch the Itch... Allergies in Pets

*Skin allergies in dogs and cats can be broadly divided into three types:
atopy (airborne allergy), contact allergy and food allergy*

Atopy (airborne allergy)

Your pet can suffer from 'hay fever' type allergies called Atopy in animals. Common triggers can be – pollens, dust mites, tobacco smoke, fungal spores...the list goes on. Symptoms include, hair loss, chewing at paws, watery eyes, itching, red and irritated skin and secondary skin and/or ear infections. There are medication options available to help relieve your pet of the symptoms.

Food allergies

Food allergies are more commonly caused by proteins or dairy, with beef, chicken, lamb and fish being the most common offenders in dogs. Dogs and cats are often allergic to more than one thing. We will often recommend a diet trial with a hypoallergenic food for 8-12 weeks after which the pet is 'challenged' with one food at a time to discover what sets off the allergic reaction.

Contact allergy

As the name suggests, contact allergies happen when the animal comes into direct contact with the allergic substance which is often a grass or plant. Typically, the feet, muzzle and under the belly are affected. Medicated washes and creams can often help with contact allergy, as well as prescription medications.

Fleas and flea allergy dermatitis

Fleas are a year-round problem in Australia but can be worse during the summer months. Many dogs and cats have an allergy to flea saliva and just one flea bite can cause extreme itchiness, hair loss and irritation. Often the problem is localised around the base of the tail, but in severe cases it can cause break-outs anywhere on the body.

If you suspect your pet might be struggling with allergies, contact us to make an appointment.