

## COW FIRST AID

With calving season upon us it is important to refresh ourselves on ways to improve cow survival rates for various problems you may encounter during this time. As it is a busy period for everyone there may be times when you need a vet and he or she might not be able to be there straight away. With most problems that occur, there are first aid measures you can use until we arrive and which should ensure a positive outcome

- **Calving Problems:** If difficulty arises or you are not sure what is going on stop and call us. Adopt the 10 minute rule when assisting a birth - if no progress in this time ring the vet. Make sure the head and both front feet (or tail and both back feet) are in the pelvic area before beginning to pull. If you think it is going to be too big, stop and call us. It is too late once you begin and the calf is jammed half in half out or not coming the right way. The cow and calf have a lot better chance if the calving is fresh. Survival of the calf is more likely if you adopt the 10 minute rule and if you stop all attempts at delivery once you have rung us. The calf is more likely to die if you persist with trying to calve the cow before we arrive.
- **Calving Paralysis:**  
Make sure the cow is in a position/area where she will not do more damage to herself. The best place is in a shed out of the weather on thick bedding e.g. hay. Call us out within 6-8 hours of calving for an anti-paralysis injection into the vein and electrostimulation to improve her chances of recovery. Good nursing is vital i.e. rolling the cow, good bedding, water and feeding. Also remember never let a cow hang in hip clamps.
- **Milk Fever:**  
Make sure the cow is sitting up with her head facing uphill (if on a slope) and not somewhere she can get cast. Give **two** warmed flow packs under the skin and if she is able to hold herself up leave her for 1-2 hours then try to get her up. If unsuccessful then call us. If she cannot sit up after giving the flow packs then prop her up with a hay bale, tractor etc and call us. It is essential the cow be in a sitting up position at all times. This should be a priority even before treating or ringing us.
- **Down Cows:**  
As mentioned above the main aim is to have the cow sitting up or propped up in an area where she is sheltered from the elements and cannot do more damage to herself. Then nursing, rolling, good bedding, feed and water are essential as well as electrostimulation.
- **Prolapses:**  
Keep the cow as quiet as possible. If down, leave her down but sitting up. Try and put a halter or rope on her and tie to a post or vehicle. This helps avoid escape and running round the paddock when help arrives - this is very important because excess swinging of the prolapse can lead to fatal internal haemorrhage. You may consider giving two warmed flow packs under the skin to mature cows as often these cows have concurrent milk fever. If possible, without upsetting the cow try to cover the prolapse in a wet sheet or towel to keep it as clean as possible until we arrive. If the cow is standing, **quietly** walk her to the yard.

- **Cut Milk Veins**

Limit the bleeding until we arrive by applying a bulldog paper clip or clothes peg onto the site to pinch off the blood flow. If this is unsuccessful keep pressure on the site until the vet arrives.

With most emergencies, good first aid until we arrive will allow for more successful outcomes. If in doubt with any problem remember the clinic is only a phone call away and no question is too stupid to ask. Finally, good luck this season, hopefully you won't need to use too many of these