

Focus on Dairy

WEIRD BLOAT CASE

One September Thursday afternoon I got call to see a troubled cow.

She was down on the yard groaning and extremely bloated. Bloated to the point I thought that this animal was going to die of bloat before my very eyes. So my priority was to let the gas out of the rumen before I did anything else. So after checking with a needle that it was free gas (the needle hissed continuously, which confirmed this) I put a little local anesthetic in and got a red plastic trocar and screwed it into the rumen. this did a great job of releasing the gas from the rumen. But she still looked terrible.



Next I thought I better figure out why she wasn't burping. I did a general exam, which did not turn up much. She was still yet to calve, with a due date about 5 days later. My exam confirmed she was still in calf and the calf was still alive. I then put a stomach tube down her throat thinking that that might tell me if there was a blockage there. I managed to get the stomach tube all the way down, showing there was no blockage. But she really did not like it, rolling over and groaning as I did. But now I was confident her throat was not blocked, but I was still very puzzled by her.

I stood back and looked at her, she was down and bloated and looking miserable. It occurred to me that all her symptoms could be explained by low calcium (milk fever). But I had never seen bloat so extreme with milk fever before and she was still days from calving.

All the same I thought it was worth trying a bag of calcium. So I got a bag and found her vein and started infusing calcium into her. She immediately started to look better and by the end of the bag was looking so much better and healthier.

She got up not long after I left the farm and calved a healthy calf a few days later.

This farm happens to have Cow Manager wearables so we were able to see her activity the day around that time. What was noticeably is on the Wednesday, (the day before) she did not eat at all or have much movement. So clearly she wasn't feeling well and did not eat. Not eating during the critical transition time then tipped her in milk fever,



even though she still had not calved yet.

So a successful outcome to possibly the strangest milk fever I have ever seen.

PHIL BROWN | TOKOROA

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TOTALLY TWISTED – DEALING WITH UTERINE TORSIONS

Calves are creative creatures, and anyone who has done calvings knows they can find any number of interesting positions to cause a problem to the cow when they enter the world.



Occasionally though, the issue lies not with the calf itself, but actually with the uterus.

Uterine torsions occur when the body of the uterus twists around at the level of the cervix and can range from 90 to 360 degrees. The twist both narrows the birth canal, and prevents the cervix from dilating properly. Cows with a uterine twist are basically stuck in stage 1 of labour (cervical dilation) and will not be able to progress to stage 2 (birth of the calf) until the twist is corrected.

In a partial or “open” twist, the cervix will be partially dilated, and you will be able to feel the calf. However the calf will often be either on its side or upside down. The twist may be difficult to distinguish from a poorly dilated cervix, but you may find that your arm drops away to the left or right as you enter the cow. These cows can often be untwisted standing, your vet may untwist them by hand, or using a Gyn stick or torsion rod.

In a complete or “closed” twist, the uterus has twisted down to a complete closure, which can easily be confused with a closed cervix. Cows with a twist of this severity either need to be cast and rolled (essentially rolling the cow around the calf) or have a c section. The key to a successful roll is having plenty of hands to help.

Once untwisted, the next problem to tackle is a poorly dilated cervix. Think of the calf as a loaf of bread, the uterus as a bread bag, and the cervix as the bread tag. Even if you untwist the bread bag, you can’t get to the bread without removing the tag! In a live or freshly dead calf, there is often a good chance the cervix will dilate. With a rotten calf, the chance of dilation is very low and prognosis is poor.

Always consider the possibility of a twisted uterus if a cow is not progressing as quickly as you expect. These cows will not tend to visibly strain or push because the calf is not able to enter the birth canal. Early detection and correction will always give the best chance of a good outcome.

BRIAR HAYES | TE AWAMUTU

TURBO Initial

TURBO Initial is a combination oral drench specifically designed for weaned calves. It provides broad worm parasite coverage as well as helping to protect against coccidiosis. This bridges the ‘susceptibility’ gap after calves come off coccidiostat-treated meal and before they develop natural coccidiosis immunity.

Active Ingredients:

Eprinomectin, Levamisole, Diclazuril, Cobalt, Selenium.

Dose rate:

1ml/10kg.

Withholding periods:

35 days meat. Not to be used on bobby calves.

Pack sizes:

1L, 2.5L, 5L & 15L.

If calves haven’t been eating grass, then they won’t have been exposed to an internal parasite challenge. Calves will need to be on grass for 3-4 weeks before any worm burden can build up in the calves.

Doing a FEC (Faecal Egg Count) test for worms before drenching is always a great way to see what’s happening with your young stock.



Talk to your Vet or local Vetora clinic about how we can help get your calves off to a great start this season.

LANCE TIBBY | PUTARURU