



Fiji DAIRYNOTE 4.4 – Breeding and Reproduction: Calving Management

Good Practice Guide for Fiji Dairy Farmers

Equipment needed

1. Halter/rope to tie cow's head
2. Long gloves (hygiene, health and safety)
3. Lube
4. Calving ropes



Good hygiene is very important when examining a calving/recently-calved animal. Wear gloves and be clean before all examinations to protect cows/calves and yourself from disease.

Location of cows

Cows near to calving should be kept in an area with no major hazards such as drains or streams. The area needs to be easy to access and where the cows can be regularly observed. Ideally this should be close to handling facilities in case any extra assistance during calving is needed.

Visual observation

- Is the cow standing or lying down? Can it walk, does it look distressed, weak or dull or are there any signs of injury/wounds?
- When was the cow last observed/checked? Has it been eating/drinking in the last day?
- Does the cow have a history of illness or have medications/treatments been given to it recently?

Signs of calving

- Cow is restless, standing up and lying down, looking at flank
- May isolate itself from other cows in the herd
- Early signs of contractions/pushing
- Signs of abdominal pain/discomfort/colic
- Water bag starting to show (amniotic sac)
- Contractions/pushing gets more obvious
- See the DairyNote about the stages of calving for more information

If calving is progressing normally, a calf should present with its two front feet and head first and be calved within 2-3 hours. If this process takes longer than two hours, the mother needs to be examined immediately. Cows/heifers can be very protective and aggressive around calving so be very careful when approaching them for your safety.



Fiji DAIRYNOTE 4.4 – Breeding and Reproduction: Calving Management

Calving presentations

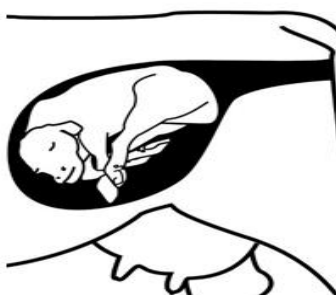
Normal presentation



This is the ideal presentation; note the head and two front legs. Any signs other than normal presentation (see 2, 3 and 4 below) must be examined as the cow might need assistance during calving.



Posterior presentation



Breech presentation



Two front legs presentation



Fiji DAIRYNOTE 4.4 – Breeding and Reproduction: Calving Management

Other problems around calving/after calving

Milk fever (low calcium)

- Emergency situation
- Weak after calving/unable to rise
- Signs continue to worsen
- More common in older and high producing cows
- Cow will die without treatment with calcium

Prolapsed womb

- Emergency situation
- Uterus/womb has come out through the vulva
- Cow has high risk of death
- Womb needs to be cleaned and gently replaced

Metritis

- Possible emergency situation
- Uterus/womb infection
- Cow off form with high temperature/fever
- Smelly discharge from vulva within 24-48 hours after calving

Mastitis

- Possible emergency situation
- Udder infection
- Cow off form, with high temperature/fever, stiff and slow to rise
- Enlarged hard udder, changes in milk (i.e. milk red/brown/watery)



Cow with milk fever – note head position



Prolapsed womb