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We will provide industry-leading, reliable, knowledgeable service, in a friendly, courteous and timely manner, to benefit our clients and the communities we serve.

Linwood Clinic Hours: Mon-Fri 7am – 5pm Sat 7am – 12pm Hwy 89 Clinic: Mon-Sat 7am-1 pm

NOTE: BOTH CLINICS ARE CLOSED SUNDAY

Orders for Delivery: ***Please call BEFORE 9:30 am*** for same day local delivery Monday to Friday

24 Hour Emergency Vet Service 1-800-663-2941

JANUARY 2016 NEWSLETTER

HAPPY NEW YEAR !

Clinic News

SAVE THE DATE !

**Dairy producers meeting Linwood Community Centre,
Friday February 19th. Details to follow!**

Do you know anyone that could use some free large styrofoam coolers, or wooden skids? Free, for pick up only, at the Linwood clinic. Please call us to arrange pick up.

Calving 101

The majority of calvings occur without assistance and without problems, resulting in a healthy, live calf and cow. But what about the calvings requiring assistance? Up to 50% of first calf heifers require assistance and 10-20% of multiparous cows require assistance. Can we, both farmers and veterinarians, work together to make assisted calvings as successful as possible? Calves who needed 'severe' assistance at birth, are 6 times more likely to die compared to calves born with minimal or no assistance. Thus, knowing when and how to intervene is key. To understand when things are headed in the wrong direction we first must understand the normal calving process.

The normal calving process is traditionally broken down into 3 stages. Stage 1, 2 and 3. It is the fetus which initiates the calving process, by releasing fetal cortisol. This triggers a hormone cascade, which results in stretching of the pelvic ligament, increased lubrication, cervical dilation and uterine contractions. Fetal cortisol is released when the calf becomes stressed, often when uterine space becomes limited.

Stage 1 (2-6 hours in duration): This stage begins with the cervix closed. Uterine contractions push the calf towards the birth canal, fetal rotation into the proper position occurs and pressure and uterine contractions cause dilation of the cervix. Behaviour exhibited by the cow at this time, may include: restlessness, back arching, mild straining, separation from herd mates. Many cows continue to eat and drink normally at this stage. Stage 1 is concluded when the water bag is expelled or visible. This stage may be longer in first calf heifers.

Stage 2 (1-2 hours in duration): This stage begins with the water bag being visible and ends with the delivery of the calf. Often the cow will lie down and contractions are clearly evident. Generally, this stage lasts about 1 hour in multiparous cows and 2-3 hours in first calf heifers. Forward progress of the calf should be evident every 15 minutes or so.

Stage 3 (up to 12 hours): Expulsion of placenta.

It is important to note that first calf heifers generally take longer to proceed through the stages of calving. Normal presentation for delivery is either, a calf coming forwards with two front legs and a head (95% of normal deliveries) or a calf coming backwards with two back legs and a tail.

When to Intervene?

Human intervention when dealing with calvings is all about timing. Assisting too early or too late can cause many problems. Pulling a calf too early can result in improper cervical and vaginal dilation, trauma to the calf and/or cow, which can result in decreased productivity or death. Intervening too late can lead to death of the calf, uterine infections, improper dilation and difficulty resolving the dystocia.

As a general rule of thumb, intervening in stage 1 should occur if stage 1 is ongoing for more than 6 hours in a multiparous cow or 8-9 hours in a first calf heifer. Reasons for slow or halted progress of stage 1 can include uterine torsions, malposition of the fetus or a dead fetus. Intervention in stage 2 should occur if no forward progress is noted within 1 hour for multiparous cows or no forward progress noted within 2 hours in first calf heifers. Reasons for slow or halted progress in stage 2 include malposition, large calves in relation to dam (malproportion) or milk fever.

When to call the vet?

Ultimately the decision about when to call your veterinarian to assist in a calving is yours. Each producer has their own level of comfort when it comes to assisting difficult calvings. By recognizing when there is a problem, assessing the situation and making the decision to intervene in a timely manner you can decrease stillbirths, trauma to the cow and ultimately improve your bottom line.

After successfully delivering a live and healthy calf, don't forget to ensure the calf is born into a clean, dry environment and receives 4 L of colostrum within 6 hours of birth. This will help keep the incidence of umbilical infections, scours and respiratory disease to a minimum. Other preventative and vaccination strategies should be discussed with your herd veterinarian to suit your individual operation.

Furthermore, please remember that first calf heifer dystocia rates can be reduced prior to calving by raising well grown heifers, ensuring heifers are not overconditioned and making use of sexed semen to keep calf weights lower.