

UTERINE PROLAPSE (CALF BED OUT) IN THE COW:

A uterine prolapse after calving is a true farm emergency. The uterus when fully expelled is large and can hang down to the level of the hocks when the cow is standing. It is easily traumatised and becomes fragile and swollen within hours. Internal bleeding can also occur causing the cow to go into shock and die.

Many different factors can lead to a uterine prolapse. A difficult calving that causes injury to the birth canal, greatly prolonged calving and or excessive/ prolonged pressure with a calving-aide are common causes. Low blood calcium (milk fever) is also associated with the condition, with very fat or very thin cows being at risk.



If you find a uterine prolapse then it is important to get veterinary help straight away. An epidural anaesthetic injection is often given by the vet to help stop the cow straining. The uterus is cleaned and placenta may be removed, or as much as is possible. Salt or sugar applied directly may help to draw fluid out of and shrink a swollen uterus. Having extra assistants on hand and being familiar with the procedure of replacement greatly helps and may increase the chance of a good outcome.

There are many different methods used to replace a uterine prolapse and most vets have a preferred one. On occasions where replacement is difficult it may be necessary to adjust the position of the cow during the procedure. Some cows remain standing and in this case it can be useful for two assistants to support the weight of the uterus between them on a towel or sheet while the vet replaces the uterus. When the cow is down the best position for replacement is lying on her stomach with the hind legs stretched out behind her, this helps to tilt the pelvis forward especially if an assistant can sit over the pelvis and help support the weight of the uterus.

Gradually the prolapse must be replaced back through the vulva. This is often easier said than done and patience is required to ensure no further damage is caused. Once replaced a bottle may be used as an arm extension to completely return the horns of the uterus in to the correct position. A ring stitch is often placed within and around the vulva. Antibiotics are often given especially if the uterus has become dirty or damaged.

Unlike sheep, it may not always be necessary to cull the cow after she has suffered a prolapse. Although reduced levels of fertility can be expected, many animals will go on to have several normal calvings with no further problems. However, if she proplases twice or has an unknown previous calving history she should definitely be culled.

BLUETONGUE 2009—WHAT TO DO?



The answer is simple – vaccinate. As anyone who attended the recent meeting at the Castle Green given by a vet with direct experience of the disease will confirm; it is not a disease we want to become established in the UK. Last year France had a voluntary vaccination policy. Those farmers close to areas of Bluetongue vaccinated, those further away didn't. Not surprisingly, those who vaccinated saw little or no infection. I've just read a recent report in the Veterinary Record discussing why the UK escaped Bluetongue last year.

The conditions were perfect for midges and for virus to replicate and there were also plenty of chances for infected midges to get blown here from the continent. The only reason there were no cases was due to farmer's willingness to vaccinate. Uptake was very high in the south and east – over 80%, high enough to prevent the virus becoming established. We need to ensure the same happens this year. By vaccinating you are not only protecting your stock but contributing to preventing the virus becoming a permanent feature in the UK. I am aware that there are still concerns about side-effects, but these are no greater than with any other vaccine. Over 10 million doses have been used with very few incidents.

Bluetongue 1 and 6, do however pose a threat. There is a vaccine for 1, but not, as yet, 6. To keep these strains out we must hope that those foolish people importing stock do not, and those foolish people in government change their import policies.

The advice from any vet is simple – to protect your stock, and your neighbours, vaccinate.

