**What is “Normal Calving”?**

The actual process of calving covers 3 stages and can last up to 20 hrs - length varies between cows and heifers.

- **Stage 1: Preparatory (2-12 hrs) - Calf is entering the birth Canal**
  - **Time Frame:**
    - Cows (2-8 hrs), Heifers (4-12hrs)
  - **What’s happening inside:**
    - Fetal cortisol increases = uterine contractions begin
    - Uterine pressure increases = calf rotates to front feet and head are positioned at the cervix
    - Uterine contractions increase = calf enters the birth canal
  - **What to look for:**
    - Signs of discomfort = restlessness, arching of the back, slight straining, kicking at the belly
    - They will urinate more frequently and separate themselves from the herd
    - Fully alert - may still eat, drink and otherwise behave normally

- **Stage 2: Delivery of the Calf (30 min-4 hrs)**
  - **Time Frame:**
    - Cows (30 min-2hrs), Heifers (1-4 hrs)
  - **What’s happening with the Cow/Heifer:**
    - Calf in the birth canal = induces reflex to push (visible abdominal contractions)
    - Pressure on calf’s feet and head in birth canal = rupture of water bag (lubrication)
    - Contractions strength = Cow/Heifer may lie down

- **Stage 3: Delivery of the Placenta (1-12 hrs)**
  - The placenta should detach from the uterus immediately after the calf is delivered
  - Contractions help deliver the placenta from the cow - DON’T HELP PULL THE PLACENTA THIS CAN CAUSE DAMAGE TO THE UTERUS
  - Delivery can be delayed because of fatigue, but should be within 12 hrs of calf delivery

**Calving Preparation Tips:**

- **PATIENCE:** Calving is a marathon not a sprint, some things can’t be rushed.
- **Timing of Feeding:** Konefal Method
  - Feeding a supplement forage once a day between 4-6pm (dusk) results in approximately 80-85% of calves born between 6am-6pm
- **Record Keeping:** Maintain Detailed Calving Records
  - Information to maintain: Due Date, Sire, Actual Calving Date, Time of Day She Started, Time Water Broke, When Feet Appeared, Delivery Complete, Length of Labor, Sex of Calf, Anything Abnormal, Anything Noteworthy
  - This information will help in future years to know what’s “normal” for each animal

- **Colostrum**
  - Calves should receive 2 quarts (5% of their body weight) in colostrum within the first 4 hours after birth - ideally 60 min
  - A total of 1 gallon within 12 hours of birth to help develop a strong immune system

**How “Normal” Delivery Progresses:**

- **Front Feet - Soles of the feet should be facing down**
  - Abdominal contractions become more frequent and intense - Progress may slow for a few minutes to allow for vulva stretching
- **Nose**
- **Shoulers**
- **Chest**
  - Mucus may come out of the calf's mouth and nostrils - this helps clear the pathways for normal breathing
- **The Best of the Calf**
  - Within 20 minutes, the cow/heifer should be standing and licking off the calf
  - Calf should be working on nursing within 20-30 min and nursing within 60 min

**Questions?**

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**COMMON MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR A SUCCESSFUL CALVING SEASON**

A. Beginning of stage 1—cervix is closed. B. Delivery, placing the baby to enter the birth canal. Oregon Calving School Handbook, 2006.