

HANDLING CALVES DURING DIFFICULT BIRTH - Level 1

Topic	Training & information Content
6.1	Selection of bulls, use of sexed semen, feeding management of dry cows
6.1.1	The calving process
6.1.2	Use of equipment around calving
6.1.3	Care of cow and calf after calving
6.1.4	Colostrum management
6.2	Milk (replacer) feeding schedule
6.3	From birth to weaning
6.4	Disease and health management
6.5	Handling of calves during difficult birth
6.6	Young stock rearing info and Key Performance Indicators



1. You will learn about (learning objectives):

- The normal process of parturition.
- How to recognize abnormalities during the parturition process.
- What to do in case of abnormalities during the process.
- How to treat the calves immediately after they are born.



2. Background

- Calving is an annually recurring process that in most cases often runs smoothly.
- As a farmer always keeps a close eye on the progress of calving.
- A farmer can sometimes do the necessary to keep the calf alive during difficult birth.

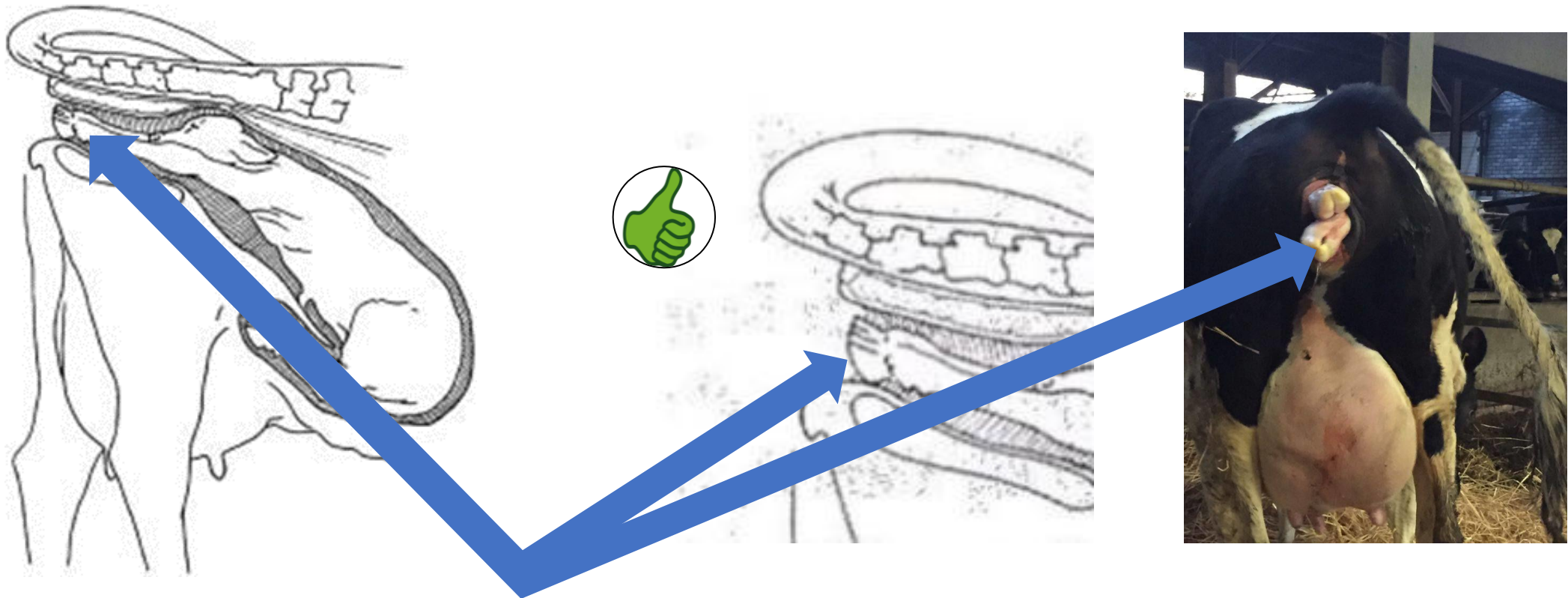


Note: When assistance is required according to the responsible person, then we speak about a difficult birth.



3. Normal calving down: Dew claws downward

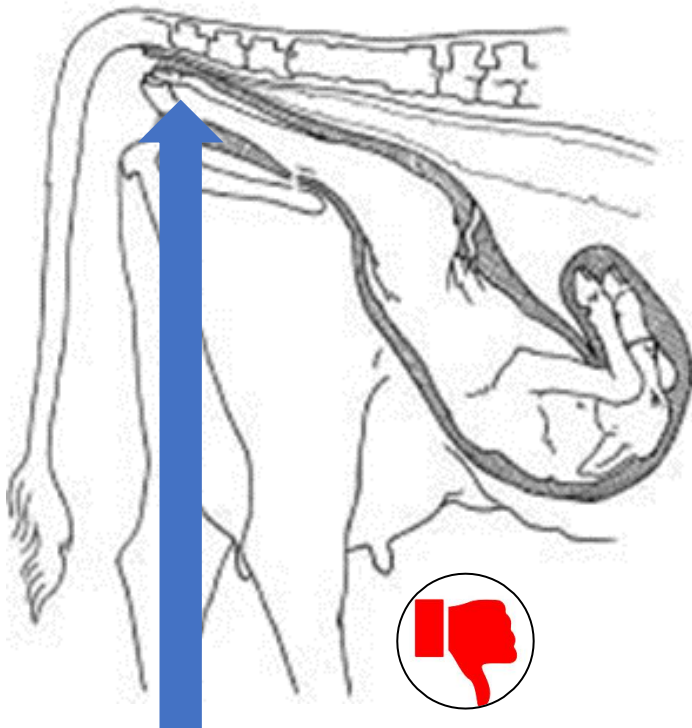
- Always pay attention to the position of the dew claws. When calf is in normal position, dew claws are always pointed downwards.



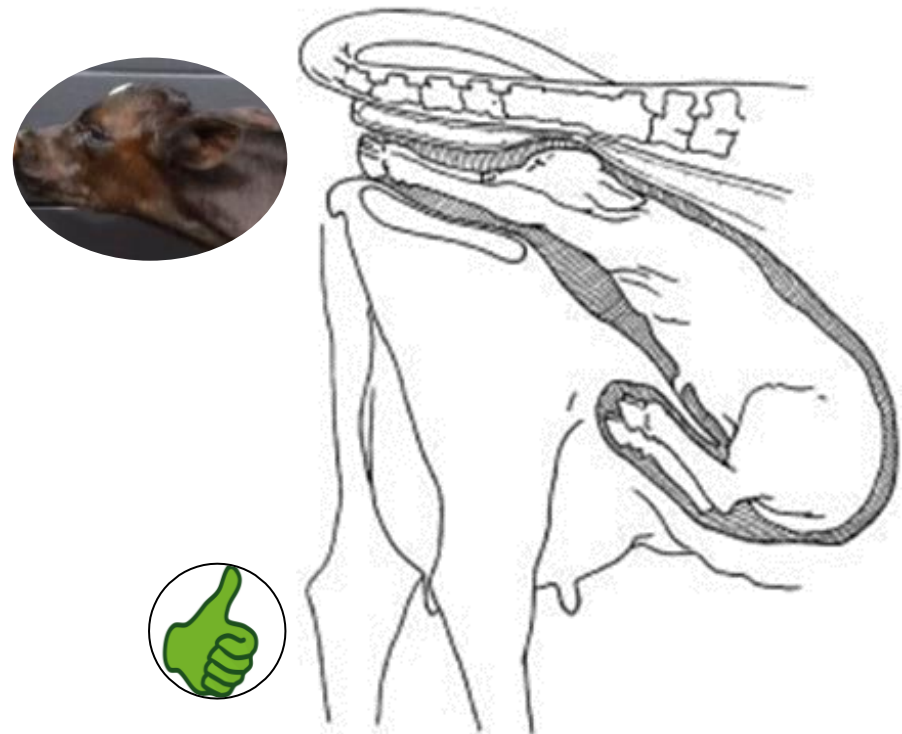
Normal presentation, dewclaws pointed downwards, one can feel the head.

3.1 Normal calving down: Legs and Head

- Normal presentation of legs is not always correct. The calving process is delayed because calf is presented in supine position.



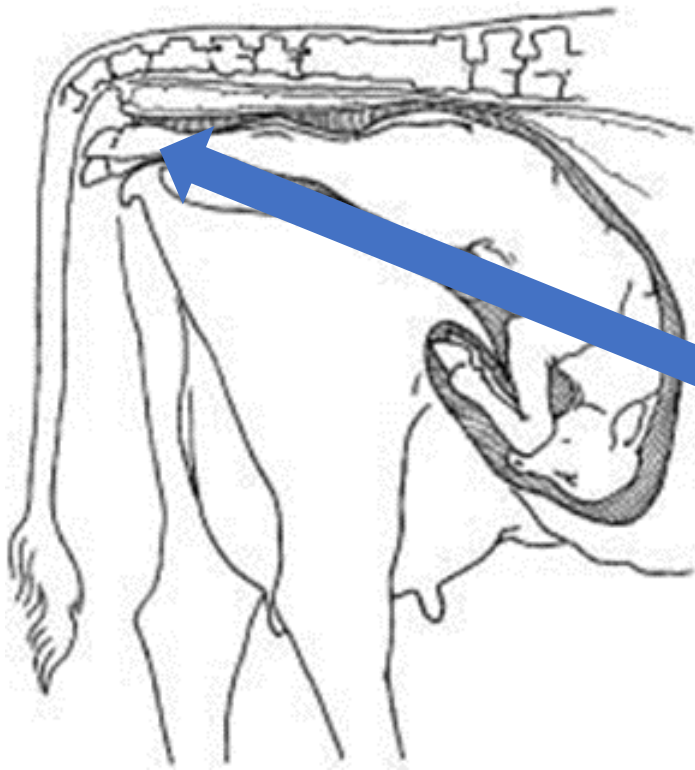
Legs seem to be in right position, but there is no head.



Legs are presented correctly, and the calf's head is nearby.

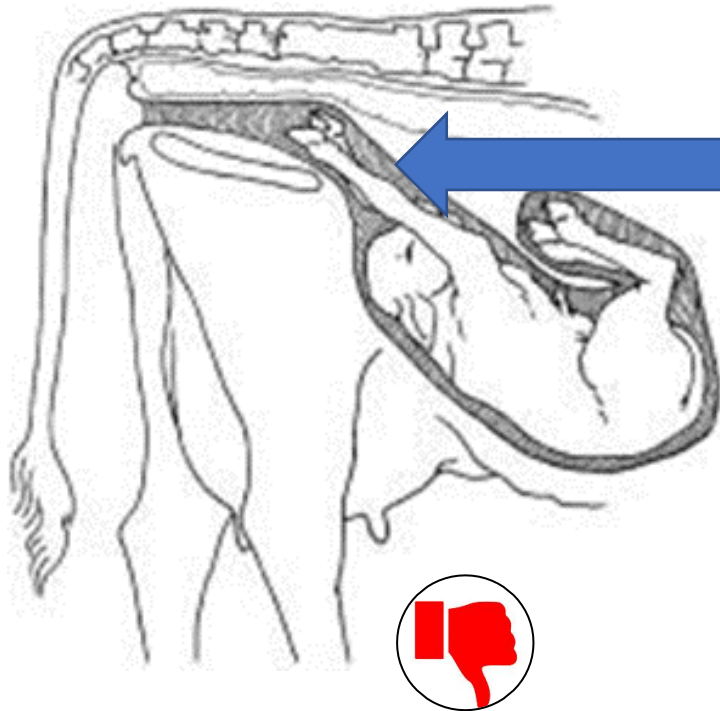
4. How recognize abnormal calving: Dewclaws upward

- The first sign of abnormality is when the dew claws are pointed up-wards. Most probably the calf is in breech position.

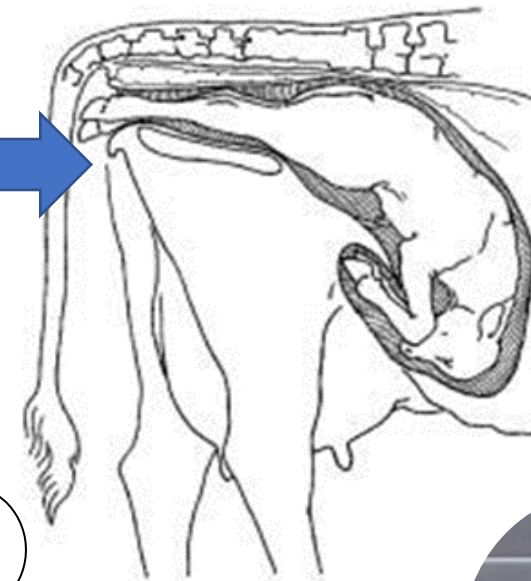


4.1 Abnormal calving cont'd...

- Sometimes there is **no progress** during calving – could the calf be in a breech position?



Breech position?



Dew claws upward!
Tail present
=
Breech position.



- No tail!
- External assistance is required immediately.
- Calf must be turned before it enters the birth canal.

5. What to do during abnormal calving

Placing OB chain

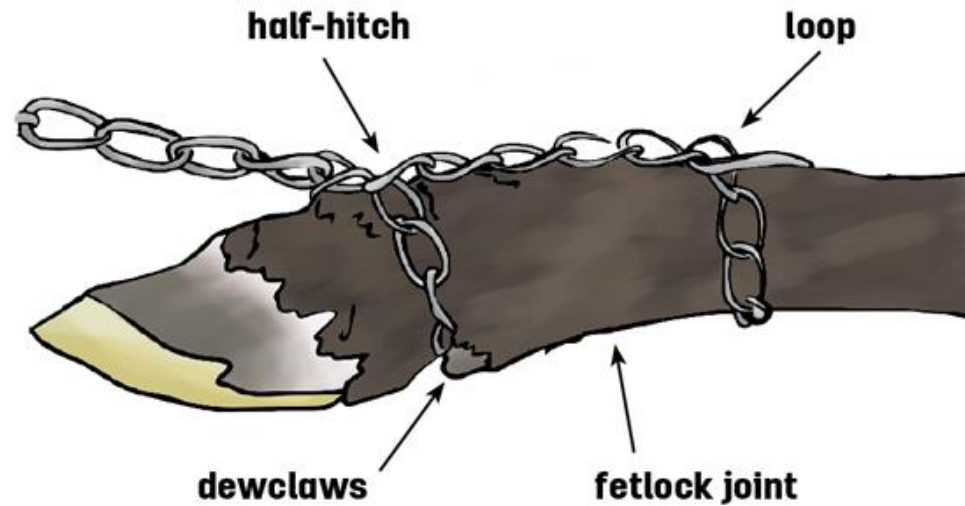


Illustration courtesy of Alabama Extension.



Video demonstration placing OB Chains

https://www.google.com/search?q=correct+placement+obstrical+chains&rlz=1C1GCEA_enNL914NL914&oq=correct+placement+obstrical+chains&aqs=chrome..69i57j33i10i160.18083j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

5.1 Placing OB chain Cont'd...

Beware: Two strong people can exert a force of 180 to 270 kg while delivering a calf. Mean force required to fracture the leg is 170 kg.



Incorrect!

This can:

- Brake the calf's leg(s).
- Pull off the claws.
- Attain 100% traction (more kgs, which is dangerous)



fetlock joint

Correct

5.2 Extraction of the calf

- Pulling too hard on the calf will lead to severe muscle acidification in the calf. This severe acidification increases stress enormously and will certainly have an impact on the respiratory rate immediately after birth.



“Controlled” extraction



Forced extraction

6. What to do to calf after birth

Assisted breathing: Recovery position

- If a calf needs assistance breathing, place it in the recovery position by rolling the calf into the sternal position where its chest and stomach are on the ground.



6.1 Assisted breathing Cont'd: Front and back legs

- The front and back legs should all be extended straight forward. This gives both lungs an equal opportunity to expand by reducing the amount of weight on them.



6.2 Assisted breathing Cont'd: Vigorous rubbing

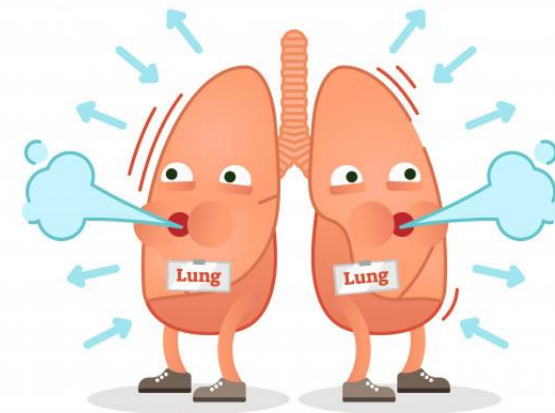
- Vigorous rubbing can also be used to stimulate a calf's breathing.



6.3 Assisted breathing Cont'd: Cold water



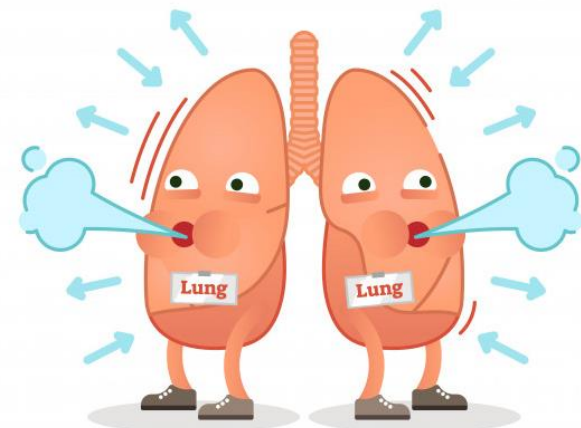
- Pouring a bucket of cold water over the newborn calf often induces a startle response and will often help induce a cough response and then optimize/activate breathing.



6.4 Assisted breathing Cont'd: Calf's nose



- Finally, tickling the inside of a calf's nose with straw or a small amount of cold water in the ear may stimulate the calf to gasp and take a breath.



7. What to avoid after birth

DON'T!

Never hang the calf upside down

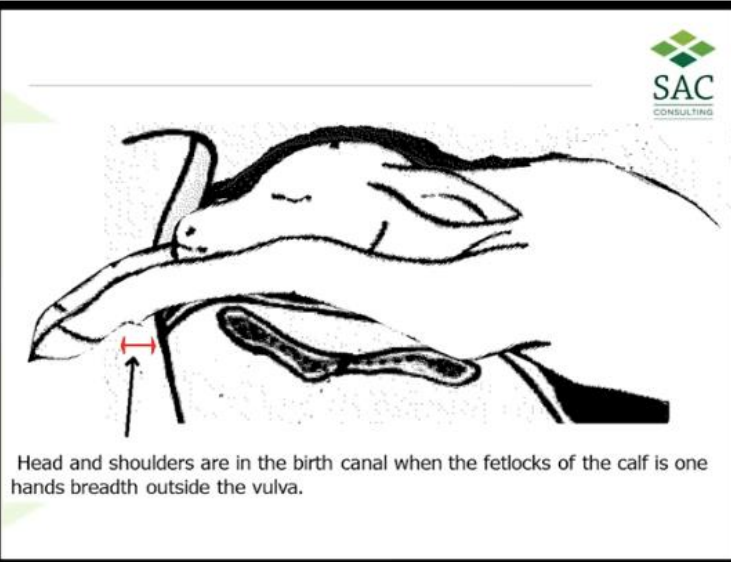
- This is because;
 - i. most of the liquid comes from the abomasum.
 - ii. of build up of pressure on the chest, making it more difficult to breathe.



8. Take home message: Watch video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf4T7N8S2iM>

☰ YouTube^{KE} <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf4T7N8S2iM>



Head and shoulders are in the birth canal when the fetlocks of the calf is one hands breadth outside the vulva.

Webinar: Successful Calving Course (for vets)

9,558 views · Dec 16, 2015

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AHDB Beef & Lamb

-END-