

Calf deformities at birth can have a wide range of causes including physical, nutritional, infectious, genetic and unknown. We will be looking at some of the more common deformities.

Flexor Tendon Contracture

One of the most common deformities- the calf is unable to fully straighten one or more of its joints (most commonly fetlock or carpus). One or more limbs can be affected. It is most often caused by malpositioning or overcrowding in the uterus, generally with a large calf compared to the dam or twins.

Firstly, check if the calf is able to suckle, particularly if they're struggling to walk, and supplement with bottle/tube feeding if necessary. Early treatment is essential, as the contracted tissues become less responsive to being stretched over time. Make sure the calf is on adequate bedding to reduce skin abrasions and call your vet to discuss the best treatment. A splint or cast may be necessary, depending on severity.

Dwarfism (Chondrodystrophy)

Calves appear tiny as they're born with very short legs, sometimes bowlegged, along with a domed skull and dished face. It is mostly seen in beef calves, either at the end of Spring Calving in April or in October. It is caused by Manganese deficiency, occurring in pregnant cows fed solely on silage, especially good quality/red clover silage. The highest risk period is when the cow is 4-5 months in calf, as this is the key stage of growth of the foetus's long bones.

Again, firstly ensure the calf can stand and suckle. As long as the calf is able to walk then the prognosis of survival is good, although some also have heart defects.

The problem is thought to be something in the silage reducing absorption of Manganese once eaten. Options to prevent problems in the future include:

- Adapting winter rations to also include other feedstuffs, such as straw
- Avoid high quality silages for mid-gestation cows
- Reduce fertilisation of fields
- Ensure daily mineral supplementation is available if problems persist

Arthrogryposis

Calves can be born with legs twisted at unusual angles and rigid due to fused joints. There are multiple possible causes including:

- Genetic Abnormality (particularly common in Charolais)
- Teratogenic plants ingested, particularly between 40-70 days of gestation (e.g. Lupinus spp.)
- Schmallenberg Virus
- Bluetongue Virus

These calves can pose challenges at calving if the legs are fused at the wrong angle. Unfortunately, the deformity is irreversible, and euthanasia is advisable.



Schistosomus Reflexus

These are the most extreme deformities you will be faced with at calving. The spine is folded backwards, causing all limbs to face towards you, with fused joints and unusually bent limbs, similar to arthrogryposis described above. Lastly the abdominal wall has failed to close meaning the abdominal contents are loosely hanging behind. If you suspect one of these then call your vet immediately.

BVD

If a naïve cow is infected during 90-150 days of gestation, she may give birth to a deformed calf. These calves have domed heads, an underbite and tend to be very wobbly and unable to stand due to an underdeveloped part of the brain. Unfortunately,

the damage is irreversible, and euthanasia is advised. A BVD investigation and PI hunt should then be considered to reduce further losses.

Ensuring successful delivery - mostly following the basic principles of calving still apply:

- Apply plenty of lubrication
- If there is a deformed limb - try to position it into the normal calving position
- Aim for smooth progress with steady traction
- Make regular assessments to ensure adequate room for delivery, as there may be another deformed leg behind.

If a leg is fused at an unusual angle and you're unable to correct it or no progress can be made with steady traction then call your vet, as an embryotomy (cutting up the calf inside the cow) or caesarean may be required.

Mastdecide Tests



We can supply these tests, that can be used on farm to decide whether a cow with mastitis should be treated with antibiotics or not. The tests detect the difference between gram negative cases (e.g. mild E.coli), which may not need antibiotics, and gram positive cases that definitely need treatment. A small cheap on-farm incubator is required, and the tests take 8-14 hours to incubate. They are not suitable for all farms, so please give us a call to discuss their use if you are interested.

TB Test Booking

Just a reminder that the procedure for booking TB tests is for farmer to contact us, once they have had the notification letter from APHA. Our staff are not able to make the initial contact. Please contact us as soon as you have had your letter, so that we can fit your test in at a convenient time for you, during your testing window. Many farmers are very organised with doing this, so if you leave it until the last minute to book, we may struggle to fit you in as the slots can get booked up quite quickly.



On-Line Sheep Meeting

Due to the popularity of their sheep talk last year, **Selekt** are delighted to be hosting a talk to support our clients in preparation for this year's lambing.

Find out:

- ▶ How, when & why to use oral fluid therapy.
- ▶ How to manage twin-lamb disease & hypocalcaemia
- ▶ How to give your lambs the best start

The talk is on the 1st March at 7.30p.m via Zoom .

Everyone who attends will be entered into a prize draw!

To register please email your name to wilton.e@nimrodvet.co.uk

SATURDAY MORNING

Reception will be open on Saturday mornings during the lambing and calving period from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm. This will run from **Saturday 4th February to Saturday 29th April.**

*** STAFF NEWS ***

We will be welcoming a new vet to the team on Monday 6th February. **Clara Valderrama** completed her internship at Synergy Farm Health in Dorset after qualifying from the Royal Veterinary College in 2021. She has been to Wales before, having seen practice at Camlas Vets in Welshpool, and being involved with a research project with Gwaredu BVD. She will be spending some time with other vets to start with, while she gets her bearings and finds out how we do things around here.

Worming Ewes

After the dry season last summer, many ewes are still not in the ideal condition for lambing, and this means that they may have higher worm egg counts than usual. Ewes tend to lose their natural immunity to worms at lambing time, so we would advise that worm egg counts are carried out on the ewes at this time. Ewes could be sampled when they are given their Heptavac-P boosters or when being housed or moved to their lambing accommodation. If the results indicate it is necessary, the ewes can then be wormed a few weeks before lambing, resulting in them being fitter to cope with the stresses of lambing and feeding their lambs. Sample kits can be collected from the practice with instructions included of how to take 10 individual samples for pooling at the lab. We could also test for liver fluke at the same time, to see if treatment for this is also needed.

