

Producer Newsletter – Calf Resuscitation

As we get well into calving season, we wanted to discuss some simple methods to help resuscitate calves that need assistance during calving.

Firstly, it is good to identify before the calf is even born which ones may need a little extra help once they enter the world. Keep a closer eye on weak/sick cows/heifers, cows/heifers who need assistance, malpresentations, twins etc. Being ready to resuscitate these will put you one step ahead!

Once the calf is born, you want to place them in a position that will help them breathe. It has been shown that hanging a calf upside down is not helpful in helping them ventilate – placing them in this position actually places more pressure on the diaphragm and lungs, thus making it harder for them to breathe. Try hanging yourself upside down and see what it feels like! The ideal position for a newborn calf is what is called the “calf recovery position.” Place the calf upright and pull both hind legs forward on either side of their body to help them stay upright as demonstrated in the picture. This position makes it easier to inflate both of their lungs and get oxygen into their system.



Next, removing fluid and mucous from the calf’s nose and mouth will help make it easier for them to oxygenate.

Then, stimulate that calf! This can be done by poking the inside of the nose with a piece of straw, or gently putting cold water/snow in their ear. You can also vigorously rub their body to help get them moving. The goal is to stimulate them to sneeze/cough/shake their head and ensure they are taking deep, big breaths.

As you are all well aware, Edson’s winter and spring months can be all over the place in terms of temperature, so making sure that your calves are warm is key. A calf that is too cold is much less likely to get up and suck colostrum in a timely manner, which can have all sorts of ramifications later on in your calf’s life. Have a clean rectal thermometer available, and be ready to warm calves less than 38 degrees Celsius.

Lastly, take a minute to think about how the calving went. Was it a hard pull? Malpresentation? New research has shown that calves treated with the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication “Meloxicam” post-calving have improved calf vigour, suckling reflex, milk intake, and growth! This is considered off-label use, so be sure to check in with us to make sure you are using it correctly.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, we hope it will help make your calving season just a little bit easier!

As always, we are available if you have questions or concerns,

Your team at the Edson Veterinary Clinic