

While most animals will give birth on their own without hassle, it pays to know what to expect and when to intervene or call for help.

### Normal Birth Process:

**1. First stage labour:** The cervix is dilating but no pushing is seen. The animal may appear uneasy or restless, with vague signs of colic. This stage usually last 2-6 hours but may take longer in first-time mothers.

**2. Second stage labour:** The cow or ewe will start to actively push and the offspring is delivered. The waterbag is pushed into the birth canal and bursts, followed by the appearance of two feet and the head. This stage should not last longer than 2 hours from the appearance of the sac until delivery.

**3. Third stage labour:** The placenta or membranes are passed. This should occur within 8 hours of the birth.

### When to intervene:

**1. First stage labour:** (vague colic, restlessness) lasts longer than 6 hours. While it may take longer in first-time mothers, it still pays to check that everything is aligned and progressing well.

**2. Second stage labour:** (active pushing) lasts longer than 2 hours with no progress, especially if the waters have broken early on.

**3. At any point:** If the mother is distressed. Excessive vocalizing, heavy breathing or thrashing on the ground.

Attempt to move the mother to an area where she can be safely restrained.

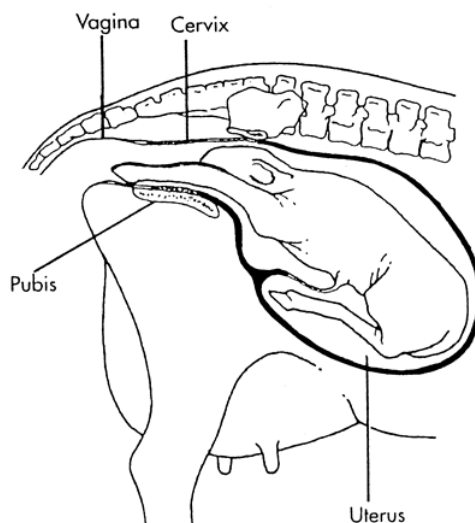
When intervening, it is very important to protect both the mother and you. Wear arm length gloves. Clean the mother's backend and your arms and hands regularly with warm water and disinfectant. Use plenty of lubricant to prevent damage to the mother.



## A GUIDE TO: PREPARING FOR Calving & Lambing

Try to determine what orientation the foetus is lying in. The natural birth position has both front legs extended forward with the head between them. Unless you have some experience with calving or lambing, it will pay to call the vet if you suspect that the orientation differs from the above.

If the cervix is fully dilated and the foetus is presented normally, you may pull on the front legs to assist the mother, as long as the head keeps coming in the right direction. Ensure you know what is presenting before you begin pulling!



You should never need to apply more pressure than one person's strength for a lambing, or two people at a maximum for a calving. The Animal Welfare (dairy cattle) Code of Welfare 2010 states that "a moving vehicle must not be used to provide traction to assist calving."

If the calf is not coming with two people pulling on it, something is wrong, and the situation needs to be re-assessed.

If you are not making any progress within 10 minutes, then it is time to call the vet.

If you have successfully managed to assist with delivery, ensure the newborn is safe and comfortable.

Afterwards change your gloves, clean the mother again, lubricate your hands, and gently check the mother for any damage or another calf/lamb/kid.

### Equipment:

It pays to have the following on hand in case you need to assist with a birthing:

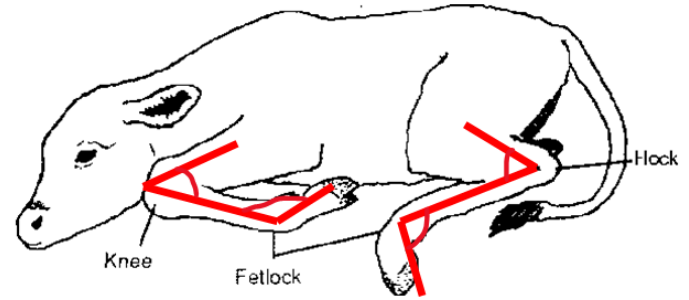
- Lubricant – the most important tool in the kit
- Antiseptic
- Gloves – arm length
- Ropes to attach to the legs and/or head to assist with gentle traction
- Iodine antiseptic to spray the navel of the newborn

If you suspect a cow or ewe had a difficult birthing, or if you have assisted in any way, she is at risk for conditions such as retained placenta, infections, and metabolic disease (milk fever).

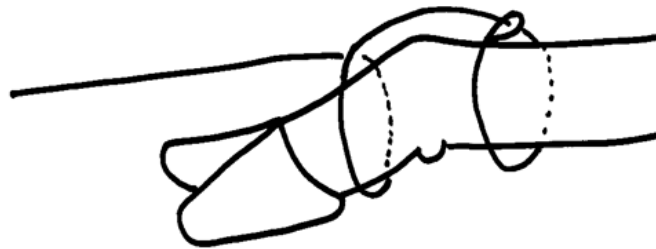
Please contact your local vet for advice on how to aid her recovery, as early intervention can make the difference to her getting pregnant again next year.

To determine which leg is presenting:

Check the angle that both the joints at the end of the leg can bend. Front legs will both bend the same way like a “C”. Back legs will bend in opposite directions like a “Z”.



Correct placement of a leg rope:



### Suggested Obstetric first aid kit

- Bucket & gloves (long & short)
- Medical grade disinfectant
- Lube
- Headlamp
- Dry towels
- KetoAid
- Starter drench
- Bearing harness or retainer (for sheep)
- Thermal blanket, wool coats & hot water bottles
- Rectal thermometer (38.5 - 40 degrees celcius is normal)
- Bottles, teats & a tube feeder
- Colostrum & milk powder
- Iodine
- Glucose powder
- Electrolytes

\*Updated Dec 25