

Management Of Retained Placentas In Practice

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Our 3 man practice is 70% food animal and the food animal part of our practice is about 50% dairy, 40% beef, and 10% swine. Our dairy practice serves about 60 grade A and grade B herds. About 30 herds are on monthly or bimonthly reproductive health programs.

Retained placentas are seen 3 ways in our practice. One is on the regular herd reproductive visit, second is on a single farm call, and third is as a hauled-in animal that is treated at our haul-in clinic.

We initially try to determine on a single animal if there is a cause for the retainment. Retained placentas that can be explained are usually caused by dystocia, twinning, milk fever, abortion, or large calf. Unexplained causes vary and are related to disease, nutrition or other factors.

If the cow is eating and progressing normally we wait until 72 hours post partum to start therapy. Usually no attempt is made to manually remove the placenta. Medication is infused into the uterus through a rubber treatment tube or a large bore 22" infusion pipette. These infusions are continued at 24 to 48 hour intervals until the placenta is discharged from the uterus. The primary medication used is made of;

250 ccs. Oxytet 100
1/6 gallon .2% Nitrofurazone Solution
1/2 pint isopropyl alcohol
Q.S. to 1 gallon with water

The volume pumped into the cow is from 500 to 1000 ccs. This is pumped with a 1 ounce plastic delivery pump from the gallon jug through the treatment tube.

Selected owners that we feel will provide proper sanitation and treatment technique to use the uterine medication are dispensed the solution, pump, treatment tube, and disinfectant to use in the process.

Any cow that is off feed is examined for other causes and treated according to the findings.

Some cows are found to have most of the placenta in the vagina and cervix. On these cases, gentle pressure is exerted on the placenta manually to aid in removal. Many of these will come loose from the uterine attachments and fall out leaving no attached pieces in the uterus. No attempt is made to manually remove the placentas that still have intact placentomes.

Prevention of retained placentas is based on a program of vaccination for disease, good sanitation, and proper dry cow and fresh cow nutrition. The usual vaccination procedures include;

- 1.) Brucellosis vaccination 2 to 6 months.
- 2.) IBR-BVD (MLV) 8 to 12 months.
- 3.) Lepto 5 Strain before breeding
- 4.) Vibrio - if natural service is used.
- 5.) Yearly boosters of lepto and vibrio with selected use of IBR-BVD.

Good sanitation in the dry cow and calving areas must be maintained even during muddy winter weather.

Nutrition during the dry cow period is especially important. A forage analysis is made on forages on the farms and rations are suggested after being balanced with a TI-59 Programable Calculator using the program developed by Dr. Tim Lesch at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. This program calls for a fiber level in the dry cow ration of over 30% and a calcium level of 37-45 grams and a phosphorus level of 32-35 grams daily. This can usually be met with a roughage-mineral blend with little addition of an energy source.

When an occasional herd has an increased incidence of retained placentas an investigative effort is made to determine why this occurs. Nutrition, disease, sanitation, and stress are usually the causes. When the problem is corrected, the incidence is usually reduced. Herds with retainments of 10% or less are not considered problem herds.

Other drugs used in the treatment or prevention of retained placentas include; selenium 50 mg. and Vit. E 700 Units given 20 days prepartum, Vit. AD injections at drying off, and oxytocin 40-100 units at calving.

Following dystocia, tetracycline or furacin boluses are placed in the uterus to prevent infection. Boluses are occasionally used at 72 hours if a solution is not infused. Some clients use boluses in addition to the solution.

A 14 to 45 day post partum check is made on all cows with retained placentas at the time of the regular herd visit. Any cow that develops pyometra or metritis as a result of retained placentas is treated at this time.