

Managing Vaginal Prolapses

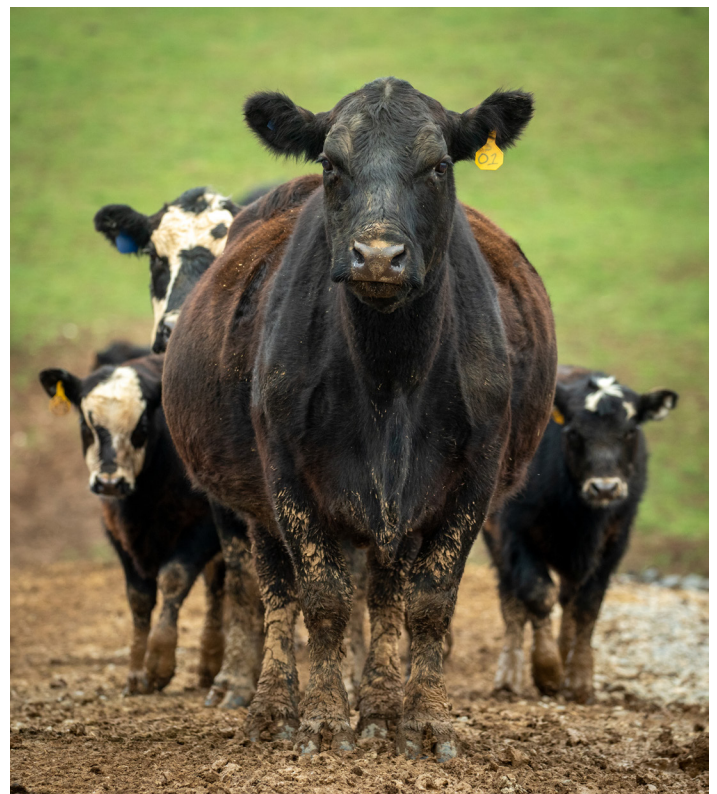
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In cow/calf operations a common condition is vaginal/cervical prolapses. When having this in these problems many producers are left with questions about “Should I keep her”? These conditions are where the vagina and/or the cervix turn inside out and protrude out of the vulva. In cattle that are late gestation, increasing estrogen causes muscles and ligaments around the vulva to relax and the cow lays down abdominal pressure increases. The vagina will turn inside out and protrude out of the vulva. Producers often mistake prolapses for calving difficulty, however these animals are not in labor. At first it will often be small and go back in the cow stands up and abdominal pressure decreases. As it goes in and out ligaments stretch and the tissues become irritated. It begins to swell and can become as large as a basketball. The irritation and pain also increase straining which makes the condition worse. Occasionally, the bladder may even be involved or on the inner side of the prolapsed vagina. As straining continues the rectum may also prolapse.

Multiple things can predispose cattle to vaginal prolapses. Estrogen from late gestation causes the muscle relaxation. Cattle may then lay with their head up will, which the gravity puts pressure on the vagina. Genetics are commonly a factor by contributing to the laxity or looseness of the ligaments. Bos indicus or “eared cattle” are frequently affected. Other factors are cows that are obese. This increases intra-abdominal pressure as well. Grazing forage that increases estrogen levels may contribute. Cows that are super-ovulated as donor cows are generally overweight and high levels of estrogen can create severe prolapses. And lastly animals that become bloated, which also is excessive abdominal pressure.

Unlike uterine prolapses this condition is often fatal, however the likelihood of reoccurrence and the genetic predisposition make culling the usual outcome. The vaginal prolapse becomes easier to put back in and stay in if caught before excessive tissue irritation and tissue damage.

In cattle, this condition does need a veterinarian to correct. An epidural is given to numb the tissues and prevent straining. The vagina is cleaned and lubricated and replaced into normal position. There are multiple methods of then getting it to stay in. The severity or the prolapse and amount of swelling and tissue damage are the biggest determinant of which method is best.



Methods veterinarians may use to correct: Buhner Stitch, Bootlace Stitch and Prolapse Kit.

1. Buhner's Stitch- After the vulva is replaced umbilical tape or a braided string is put vertically around each side of the vulva and tied below.
2. Bootlace Pattern or horizontal mattress- in this a strong braided suture is put in a crossing pattern going into the tissue of the vulva.
3. A prolapse kit is specially designed to go into the vulva and tack the vulva and through the muscles of the pelvis and gluteal muscles.

The traditional Buhner Stitch is the strongest hold. However, since these cows are generally late gestation, this method can also cause severe or fatal tears if the stitch is not removed before the cow calves.

The horizontal mattress patterns should also be removed but since they generally are as deep it is less detrimental if it not cut although, many times it can also cause death of the calf if doesn't break or doesn't tear fast enough. Lastly are the prolapse kits, the advantage is cows can calve unassisted without having to remove suture. The prolapse kits have a much higher chance of complications of damaging tissues that the pin is put through. This method generally is a little more expensive due to cost of the kit and putting it in. Since plastic is easily broken in cases that are severe, swelling is excessive or cow is intensely straining prolapse kits are not recommended.

After the prolapse is replaced management decisions can become difficult. As the cow is usually close to calving, should she or should she not be sold? Labor increases as cow will have to be watched as to make sure she doesn't break the prolapse kit by straining or if she has a stitch it must be removed shortly before she calves. So depending on the size of your farm and

the ability to monitor cows closely and get up easily the decision will vary between situations. However if she is kept and calves without complication, the weaned calf is more valuable than selling her as a weigh cow.

Vaginal prolapses are reoccurring, so even if she is kept to raise the calf. She should not be bred again, as each year the prolapses will be more difficult to repair. Also, with if she has a genetic predisposition, her offspring should be considered as culls. This is a more difficult decisions as when it occurs in mature cows, producers have often kept heifers as replacement females. For some small farms, this may mean a large percent of herd are at risk. Although her sons won't have a vagina to prolapse, if he is used for breeding his daughters may have problems. When buying a herd bull, pedigree and EPDs are generally readily available but medical history of dam and sire are not. For each farm, solutions may be different. Talk with your local vet, and consider the cost of repair and risks of complications.

References

<https://www.merckvetmanual.com/reproductive-system/vaginal-and-cervical-prolapse/overview-of-vaginal-and-cervical-prolapse>

