

# Calving the cow: a quick guide



## STAGE 1 0 -6 hours (up to 24 hours in heifers)

- Seeking isolation
- Restless
- Shifting weight from one leg to the other
- Kicking at belly
- Swishing and raised tail
- Vaginal discharges become more liquid

## STAGE 2 30 minutes - 4 hours (May be longer in heifers)

Water bag appears

Feet out

Head out

BIRTH

Over 2 hours and no progress

Straining for 30 minutes but making no progress

Head and legs not gliding in and out during contractions



Leave for 30 mins

Head and feet in pelvic canal and can  
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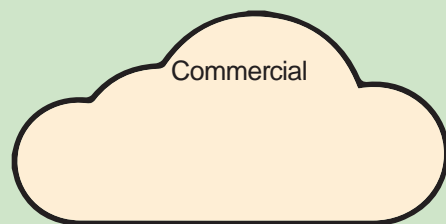
Can pull fetlocks outside vulva

Front legs NOT crossed?

Probably too big

Intervention

# Care of the cow and calf post calving



## Calf is born

Clean mucus from nose and mouth

### Stimulate breathing:

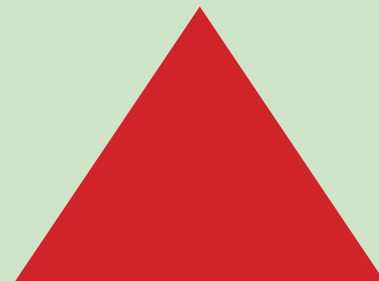
Sit calf upright

Straw in the nose

Massage chest with forelimb

Rub the chest with clean straw

Cold water into ears/over the head



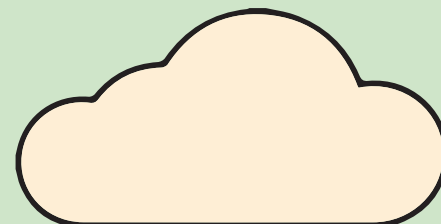
Potential problems:  
Hard calving  
Insufficient oxygen/acidosis  
Trauma during calving  
**Call vet for advice**



### Calf should be:

Breathing regularly AND holding its head up within 5 minutes

Attempting to stand up within 15 minutes



## CALF

Colostrum

Starting to suckle within 1 hour of birth

Hard suckling for at least

20 minutes in the first 2 hours

Dip or spray navel with disinfectant e.g. 10% iodine (if safe to do so)

Provide clean and dry bedding for calf

## COW

If you have intervened:

Check for second calf

Check for bleeding and tears

Administer an anti-inflammatory/pain relief

(discuss best option with your vet)

Provide fresh water and food

Cow should expel afterbirth within 12 hours

Move cow and calf into pen with other calved cows

Provide calf refuge