



Reviving a Newborn Calf That Isn't Breathing: A Farmer's Guide

Description

The birth of a calf is an exciting moment for any dairy or beef farmer, but sometimes newborns struggle to take their first breath. If a calf is born weak or unresponsive, immediate intervention can mean the difference between life and death. This article explores practical steps to help a newborn calf start breathing.

Why Do Some Calves Struggle to Breathe at Birth?

Several factors can cause a newborn calf to have difficulty breathing:

1. **Difficult Birth (Dystocia)** - Prolonged labor can cause oxygen deprivation.
2. **Fluid Blockage** - Mucus in the airways can prevent proper breathing.
3. **Weakness or Stress** - Some calves are born weak due to poor fetal development or a stressful birth.

Steps to Stimulate Breathing in a Newborn Calf

1. Clear the Airways

- Gently remove mucus and fluids from the calf's nose and mouth using a clean cloth or suction bulb.
- Elevating the calf's hind legs for a few seconds can help drain excess fluids.

2. Position the Calf Correctly

- Lay the calf on its chest with its legs tucked underneath. This allows the lungs to expand properly.

3. Stimulate Breathing

If the calf is still not breathing:

- **Rub the chest vigorously** – This stimulates circulation and encourages the calf to breathe.
- **Hang the calf upside down briefly** – As seen in the illustration, this can help clear fluid from the lungs. However, this should only be done for a short time, as it may also restrict lung expansion.
- **Use a breathing stimulant** – If available, medications like Dopram-V can help encourage respiration.

4. Perform Artificial Respiration (if needed)

If the calf remains unresponsive:

- Close the calf's mouth and gently blow into one nostril while blocking the other.
- Repeat at 30-second intervals until the calf starts breathing.

5. Keep the Calf Warm and Monitor Recovery

- Dry the calf thoroughly and place it in a warm, dry area.
- Ensure the calf receives colostrum within the first few hours to boost immunity and energy levels.

When to Call a Veterinarian

If the calf remains weak or struggles to breathe after initial efforts, seek veterinary assistance immediately.

Conclusion

Every second counts when reviving a newborn calf. Clearing the airways, stimulating breathing, and providing warmth are critical steps to saving a struggling calf. By understanding these techniques, farmers can improve calf survival rates and ensure a strong start to life.

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