



Rochester Veterinary Practice, 72 Lowry Street Rochester 3561, Phone (03) 54842255 admin@rochyvet.com.au

## When to Help a Cow/Heifer have their Calf

Firstly, we need to understand the three stages of labour:

STAGE 1: Commencement of calving - calf positioning into the birth canal and cervix opening- the cow/heifer may pace around and sit down and get back up repeatedly and frequently swish their tail. This process takes approximately 1-4 hours.



STAGE 2: 'Water bag' ruptures- the calf is present in the birth canal and the cow/heifer is actively pushing to deliver the calf- this process takes approximately 1-3 hours for heifers and 30mins-1 hr for cows. \* Cows generally calve faster than heifers.

STAGE 3: Passing the placenta (membranes)- this process can take minutes to days to occur.

If you notice a cow or heifer calving and has failed to progress after 30-45minutes of labour, it is worth checking to see if everything is normal.

### What to do if you need check if the calving cow/heifer may need assistance:

- Wash the vulva of the cow with clean water.
- Make sure your arms are clean.
- Use lubricant.
- Assess if the birth canal is open and assess the position of the calf.
  - o If the calf come headfirst or backside first?
  - o Are there two legs presented in the birth canal?
- Deliver calf if able to do so\*\*
  - o Manually or using a calving jack or pulley system.
- Allow 20 minutes to correct a malpresented calf, and if delivery of the calf has not occurred in this time, seek veterinary assistance.
- If you were able deliver the calf, check cow for twins, vaginal and/or uterine tears and if membranes are still present.

\*\*NEVER use motor vehicles to try and extract a calf from a cow/heifer.