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## Caecal dilatation and/or torsion in Cattle

Each year around November our clinic sees several cows with caecal dilatation and/ or torsion.

The caecum is also known as the appendix and is a blind ended organ. It is located where the small intestines meet the large intestine. The caecum is important for fluid absorption and some fermentation and absorption of volatile fatty acids.

The exact cause of the caecal dilatation and/or torsion is unknown. It is likely to be due to reduced gut motility (movement) and excess gas production in the large intestine. This combination leads to an accumulation of fluid and gas in the caecum, causing it to become distended and possibly twist on itself.

Cows with caecal dilatation usually show signs of reduced milk production, mild colic, and reduced faecal output.

Cows with caecal torsion usually show more acute signs of sudden and marked reduction in milk production, off their feed and signs moderate signs of colic (flank watching, kicking at abdomen, preference to lie down and shifting weight on back legs).

The dilated caecum may cause the right flank of the cow's body to appear distended and on rectal examination the caecum may be felt (it is not often normally felt).

Diagnosis can be difficult as the condition resembles an RDA and is often diagnosed at surgery.

Management of cattle with mild caecal dilatation includes; Supplying the cow with good hay only, giving a laxative (Epsom salts or coffee or paraffin oil) orally and giving calcium. Most cattle recover in 2 to 4 days.

Management of cattle with caecal torsion is surgically emptying and repositioning the caecum to its normal position in the abdomen. Once the surgery is completed the cows are treated similarly to those that are managed medically.