

Retained Placenta

Definition

Occurs when the placenta surrounding the fetus fails to separate from the uterine wall within 12 hours after calving.

Incidence of retained placenta is higher following difficult calving, twinning, premature birth, milk fever and when other calving stress is placed on the cow. Infectious diseases will also increase the incidence. Older cows will generally have a higher incidence than heifers.

Symptoms

1. Fetal membranes protruding from the cow.
2. Abnormal uterine discharges or odors.

Treatment and Recovery

Manual extraction, intrauterine infusions, hormonal injections (primarily oxytocin) or any combination of these are common. No treatment has been advocated by some veterinarians to prevent possible uterine contamination. Uterine infections are common with retained placenta.

Nutritional Prevention

3. Provide adequate levels of Vitamin A and E, calcium, iodine and selenium. Research suggests 1,000-2,000 units of Vitamin E may be beneficial in the dry cow ration. In problem situations, Vitamin E/selenium injections may be helpful.
4. Force feed rather than free choice dry cow mineral.
5. Calve cows in a clean, stress free environment.

