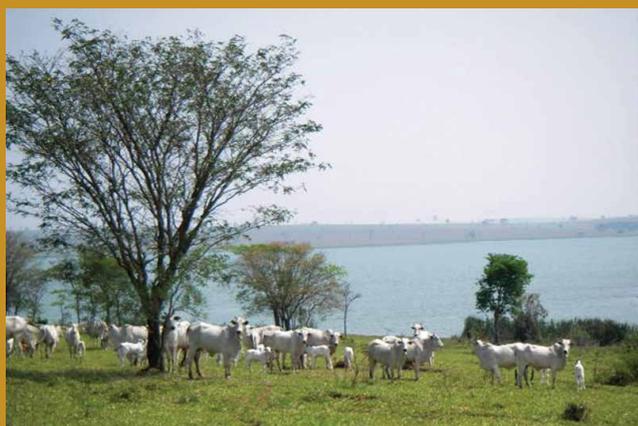


Best Practices of Handling CALVES AT BIRTH



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The adoption of good practices for newborn calves handling is essential for the economic success of the cow-calf operations. Thus, it is essential to carry out the newborn manipulation with great care and attention, ensuring that they will not suffer unnecessary pain and distress when these procedures are carried out. This flyer presents a summary of the guidelines to improve the handling procedures of calves at birth by describing the preparation of facilities and equipment for calving season; presenting the best practices for newborn calves handling and showing how to monitor the calves' conditions during the first weeks of life. We believe that these recommendations can be useful to promote calves' welfare and the profitability of cow-calf operations.



Best practices of calves at birth - step-by-step

1. Inspect the maternity pastures before the beginning of calving season. Fill the holes in the ground and make sure that fences and water troughs are in good order.
2. Be sure that the equipment and materials that will be used to identify and care for calves (medicines, tattoo tool, tattoo paste, ear piercer, scissors, needles, syringes, scales, etc.) are available and in good conditions.
3. Drive the pregnant cows to the maternity pasture around one month before the parturition.
4. The pregnant heifers should, ideally, be driven to another pasture, separating them from multiparous cows during calving season.
5. Define who will be responsible for overseeing calvings and taking care of the newborn calves.
6. Visit the maternity pasture at least twice a day (once in the morning and then in the afternoon).
7. Always carry a pocket notebook and a pencil (or a pen) for field notes.
8. Pay attention to calving difficulties, calf rejection and weak calf; record these situations and notify the manager or the veterinarian, so that the appropriate measures are taken to solve the problems.
9. Calf death or any other problem or situation observed in the maternity pastures should be recorded in the pocket booklet (extreme weather conditions, vulture attacks, broken fences, etc).
10. Do not start handling the newborn calves just after calving, wait around 6 hours after the birth (when the cow-calf bond is already established) to do so. Attention! When any problem is detected, act immediately.
11. Hold the calf by the groin and neck. Lift the calf up a bit, supporting its body on your leg, then make it slide down to the ground. Never throw it on the ground!
12. Take care of the calf's navel.
13. Identify the calf, preferably using a tattoo.
14. Weigh the calf whenever possible.
15. Observe if the calf ingested the colostrum and, if not, help it suckle. Write down in the pocket booklet the probable causes of the fail in the first suckling (large teats and udder, weak calf, maternal rejection, etc.). These calves should be helped until they are able to suckle on their own.
16. Maintain daily routine visits, or as often as possible, to diagnose any problem, such as trapped, weak, or ill calves.

