Veterinary Science
Preparatory Training for the Veterinary Assistant

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Assistance at Birth

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Objectives

- Describe the types of dystocia
- Describe the types of procedures in handling dystocia
- Describe the normal parturition process
Dystocia

- Difficult birthing process
- Cattle herd
  - First calf heifers – 50%
  - Second calf heifers – 25%
  - Remainder of herd – 25%
Dystocia Causes in Cattle

- Calf too big in heifer
  - >70 lbs birth weight
- Heifer too small
  - <85% of expected mature weight
  - Small pelvic area measurement (size, shape)
  - Small vulva opening
- Cow/heifer too weak (malnutrition)
- Abnormal presentation (backwards, breech, sideways)
- Abnormal position (upside down)
- Abnormal posture (head back, leg(s) back)
Parturition in Cattle

- Birthing process
- Stage 1 (2 – 6 hrs)
  - Contraction of uterus
  - Dilation of cervix
- Stage 2 (½ – 4 hrs)
  - Abdominal press
  - First water bag ruptures
  - Expulsion of calf in second water bag
- Stage 3 (8 hrs – 3 days)
  - Expulsion of placenta (afterbirth)
- Stage 4 (2 – 6 hrs)
  - Nursing of calf
Assisting Difficult Calving

- Intervention
  - No abdominal press after 6 hrs in Stage 1
  - No fetal parts after 2 hrs in Stage 2
  - Second water bag for 2 hrs in Stage 2
  - No progress of fetal parts after 1 hr in Stage 2
- Proper restraint
- Sanitary measures
- Proper lubrication
Placement of Chains

- Loop above fetlock
- Half-hitch below fetlock
Precautions

- Pull though an arc
  - Up – Up – Up
  - Down – Down – Down
- Walk the calf out one leg at a time
- Use diagonal position
- Keep tip of nose at ankle
- Avoid excessive force
- Calf extractor (puller) is dangerous
Care of New Born Calf

- Clear mucus from air passages
- Rub and massage chest
- Apply 2% iodine to navel
- Provide milk nursing within 6 hrs
Care of Post-calving Heifer or Cow

- Vaginal and uterine exam
  - Tears
  - Another calf
- Administer appropriate treatment
- Allow bonding with calf