

Risk Factors for Dystocia in Cattle [†]

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The understanding and classification of the general causes of dystocia in cattle has changed little in the past 40 years. In decreasing order of occurrence, the three most important general causes of dystocia in beef cattle are considered to be:

1. Fetopelvic disproportion.
2. Posterior presentation of the fetus
3. Ineffective labour

These three causes of dystocia are reported to account for 30–70%, 20–45% and 10–20% of dystocias in beef heifers respectively.

Although it is convenient and traditional to classify the causes of dystocia in this way, these broad classifications don't provide a clear basis for specific control measures to be implemented. For example, fetopelvic disproportion simply suggests an incompatibility between the size of the fetus and the size of the maternal pelvis. The reason for the incompatibility could be one, or a combination, of many factors. With an emphasis on nutrition, this presentation explores specific causes and risk factors for dystocia as a basis for developing effective control measures.



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