



TWISTED STOMACH IN ORGANIC CATTLE

Guidance

Twisted stomach, also known as left or right displaced abomasum, occurs when the true stomach of the cow becomes displaced. Ruminants, such as cattle, have four stomachs, and the abomasum, or true stomach, normally lies on the floor of the abdomen. Twisted stomach occurs when the abomasum becomes filled with gas and rise to the top of the abdomen. The abomasum is more likely to be displaced to the left than the right.

The majority of cases occur soon after calving. During pregnancy, the uterus displaces the abomasum, so that after calving the abomasum has to move back to its normal position, increasing the risk of displacement.

There are a number of common risk factors for displacement of the abomasum, including cows over conditioned at calving (body condition score of 3.5 or greater); low blood calcium; excess concentrates in relation to forage in the diet of the cow post calving; a lack of long fiber in the diet; and a poor transition diet in the immediate post calving period.

In addition, if the abomasum stops contracting and turning over its contents, accumulation of gas will occur and the abomasum will tend to move up the abdomen. This tends to be a cause of inadequate nutrition.

Mastitis (inflammation and infection in the udder), metritis (inflammation and infection in the uterus), metabolic ketosis, and low calcium are commonly encountered problems in the recently "freshened" cow, and any of these problems contribute to hypomotility within the gut, which leads to excessive gas accumulation.

NOP REGULATIONS AND PCO POLICY

The National Organic Program (NOP) regulations require that livestock producers establish and maintain preventive livestock health care practices. When preventive practices and veterinary biologics are inadequate to prevent a sickness, such as twisted stomach, a producer may administer synthetic medications, provided that such medications are allowed according to the NOP regulations. If allowed medications fail, you must not withhold a medical treatment from a sick animal in an effort to preserve its organic status. All appropriate medications must be used to restore an animal to health when methods acceptable to organic production fail. Livestock treated with a prohibited substance must be clearly identified and shall not be sold, labeled, or represented as organically produced. §205.238

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SYMPTOMS OF TWISTED STOMACH

Symptoms of twisted stomach include:

- Loss of appetite
- Decreased milk production
- Reduced rumination
- Mild diarrhea

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Prevention should be aimed at ensuring dry matter intake is maintained in early lactation. Ensure cattle are not over-conditioned at calving (i.e. >3.5 BCS). Feed high quality feeds, with good quality forage, and feed a total mixed ration as opposed to concentrates. Ensure that cows have plenty of space at feeding sites.

Minimize changes between late dry and early lactation ration. Prevent and promptly treat diseases such as milk fever, metritis, toxic mastitis and retained afterbirth which reduce feed intake. It is best to maximize cow comfort, and minimize stress.

TREATMENT PRACTICES

Treatment requires replacing the abomasum in its normal position. Surgery can be performed, however isn't always necessary. Contact your vet to determine which treatment is necessary for your situation. Often the abomasum can be returned to its usual place by casting and rolling the animal onto its back, permitting the abomasum to "float" back into its normal position.

If surgery is required, xylazine and tolazine may be used. They are permitted for use by or on the lawful written order of a licensed veterinarian. If either is used, a meat withdrawal period of at least 8 days after administering to livestock intended for slaughter and a milk discard period of at least 4 days after administering to dairy animals is required.

PCO is not endorsing the efficacy of any of the approved treatments, and producers should work with a trained professional to treat any distressed animals.

RESOURCES

- <http://www.thecattlesite.com/diseaseinfo/211/displaced-abomasum-in-cattle/>
- http://www.petmd.com/blogs/thedailyvet/aobrien/2012/sept/the_case_of_the_twisted_stomach-26891