



WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER



Spring - the season of new life!

What is "Normal"?

Understanding normal labour helps you spot problems early:

Stage 1 (Preparation): Restlessness, isolation, udder filling (2–6 hours in sheep/goats, up to 12 hours in cattle)

Stage 2 (Delivery): Active straining and delivery of the young

Sheep/goats: 30–60 minutes

Cattle: 1–2 hours (up to 4 hours in heifers)

Stage 3 (Placenta): Passed within 6–12 hours

If progress stalls, intervention may be needed.

Common Causes of Difficult Births (Dystocia)

Malpresentation (Incorrect Positioning)

One of the most frequent causes across all species.

What to look for:

- Prolonged straining with no progress
- Only part of the lamb/kid/calf visible

Action:

1. Wash your hands/arms and use lubrication before attempting correction
2. If you are unsure, or unable to correct within 10–15 minutes, call us



Oversized Offspring

More common in:

- Single lambs/kids
- Well-fed ewes/does
- Beef cattle breeds or heifers

Signs:

- Front feet and head visible but no further progress
- Excessive force required to pull

Action:

Gentle traction only, in time with contractions, but if no progress, veterinary assistance is essential (as they may require a caesarean)

Twin or Multiple Birth Complications

Particularly in sheep and goats.

Issues include:

- Two lambs/kids entering the birth canal together
- Confusion of limbs (e.g., legs from different offspring)

Signs:

- Multiple legs present but no clear head
- Labour not progressing normally

Action:

- Careful identification of limbs before assisting
- Seek help early if unsure

When to call us...

Early intervention saves lives. Call promptly if:

- No progress after 30 minutes (sheep/goats) or 1 hour (cattle) of active straining
- You cannot correct a malpresentation, suspect a very large lamb/calf/kid or excessive force is needed
- The mother is exhausted or distressed
- There is abnormal discharge (e.g. foul smell, bleeding)

If you have any concerns during lambing or calving, don't hesitate to contact the practice on 01328 864444. Early action can make all the difference.

