

Retained Placenta in Cattle: How to Reduce its Occurrence and Improve Farm Economics

What it is: If your heifer/cow fails to expel the placenta (also called afterbirth) by 24 hours after calving, it is called Retained placenta. It results from non-detachment of placental union with the mother's uterus.



A case of retained placenta

How it affects your farm:

- There will be economic loss involved through making you spend money on medication, treatment, etc.;
- There is every chance of developing some infection or trauma inside the uterus if not attended and treated properly. There may even develop systemic infection;
- If gone for manual removal there may rupture in the uterus which may lead to severe bleeding. This will necessitate another course of treatment and strain you with another expenditure;
- This may also lead to development of reproductive disorders like-repeat breeding, anoestrus, accumulation of pus/mucus inside the uterus, etc. causing delay in next conception. Delayed conception may further lead to another round of economics loss in terms of medication, wasting of valuable time, cost on hired labour, feeding, care and management and loss of lactation days;
- Pulling with force may cause uterine prolapse which would attract another expenditure on medication and treatment.



Retained placenta is being treated

What may cause retained placenta:

- **Uterine inertia:** When the muscles of the uterus of the heifer/cow become exhausted after prolonged contraction against an obstructing or oversized foetus.
- **Abortion / Stillbirth:** If there is abortion or stillbirth, the placenta may be retained. It is almost always present in case of abortion caused by brucellosis.
- **Aged cow:** If your cow is aged enough, there is every possibility of retained placenta as ageing causes weaker contractions of the uterus.
- **Dystocia:** Dystocia (difficulty in delivery) causes exhaustion of muscles of the uterus of the heifer/cow resulting from the prolonged uterine contraction.
- **Vit. A & E deficiency:** If you do not supplement the feed of your heifer/cow with Vit. A & E and minerals like calcium, magnesium, etc., this may lead to retained placenta.
- **Placentitis:** If there is infection/inflammation of the placenta of the heifer/cow, this may also cause retained placenta.

Measures to reduce the occurrence of the problem:

- Always maintain a proper plan of nutrition;
- Give proper mineral and vitamin supplement during pregnancy;

What you should do if retained placenta occurs:

Dos	Don'ts
Call the nearby veterinary doctor for removal of placenta.	Never try to pull the hanging portion of placenta which will cause removal of only the visible external portion and pulling with force may cause the uterus to come outside (prolapse).
Take all the personal protective measures like wearing of mask, hand gloves, gum boot, etc. and farm hygienic measures like washing the floor with disinfectant.	Do not wait for too long for spontaneous shedding of the placenta.
Dispose of all the materials away from the farm/ homestead by deep burial.	Never touch and handle the cow and the aborted materials with bare hands because it might be due brucellosis which is easily communicable to human (causes sterility in man).
Use oral ecbohic preparations right after calving on advice of the local veterinarian.	Do not put on some weight by hanging some heavy object tied to the hanging portion of placenta, it can severe the placenta and it will be difficult for the attending veterinarian to remove the part remaining inside the uterus.
Cull the cow if infected with brucellosis (after getting confirmation by the veterinarian).	