

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

What it is: When your pregnant heifer/cow finds it difficult to deliver the foetus normally during labour and the labour becomes markedly prolonged by more than an hour, it is considered as dystocia.

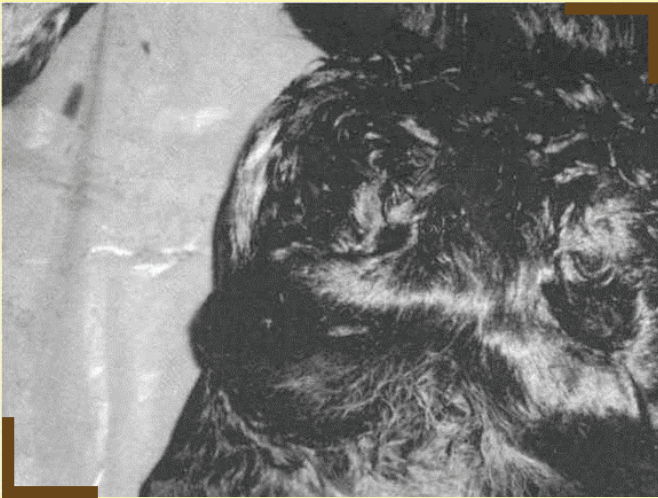
How it affects your farm:

- Dystocia may cause death of the foetus leading to loss by one lactation ;
- In case of foetal death, it makes you lose one calf and eventually a grown up animal with higher monetary value (if kept for 2-3 years).
- If not attended in proper time it may result in death of the cow and make you face heavy economic loss;
- The expenses incurred on feeding and maintenance are without any returns for the period until she calves in the next lactation;
- This will add to the economic burden through expenses incurred against treatment and medication.
- It may give rise to various reproductive diseases like-infection in the reproductive tract, delayed post-partum oestrus, pyometra, etc.;

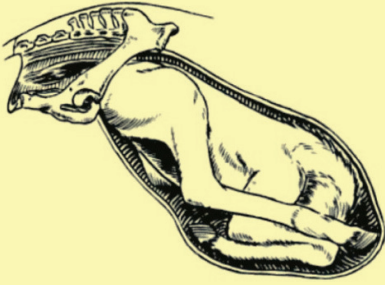
What may cause dystocia: Broadly, causes of dystocia are of two types-

a) Foetal factors and b) Maternal factors.

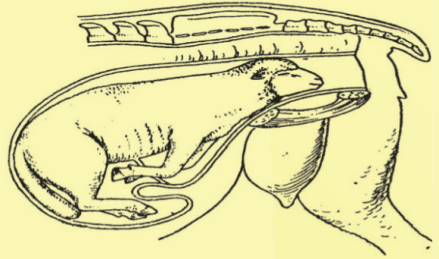
- a) Foetal factors:** There may be developmental defects of the foetus inside the womb of the mother like abnormal foetal position, abnormal foetal presentation, conjoined twins, foetus with extra-large head, oversized foetus, etc. causing dystocia.



Developmental foetal defects



Abnormal foetal presentation



Abnormal foetal posture

b) Maternal factors:

- Sometimes, the mouth of the neck portion of the uterus fails to relax properly during calving leading to dystocia
- The size of the birth canal of your cow/heifer may remain narrower as compared to the size of the foetus. It creates difficulty in expulsion of the foetus properly during labour leading to dystocia;
- If your cow/heifer is having mineral deficiencies, obesity, etc. these may be factors for dystocia;
- Sometimes, the uterine muscles of your cow/heifer become exhausted after prolonged contraction against an obstructing or oversized foetus and leads to dystocia;
- Cow/heifer with history of hip joint fracture/ dislocation will cause obstruction to their birth canal;



Hip joint dislocation

- Cow/heifer having tumour in the birth passage will develop dystocia.

Measures to be adopted to reduce the occurrence of dystocia:

- Do not breed your cow/heifer with history of hip dislocation/fracture;
- Never engage any local service provider for treatment;
- Keep your cow/heifer stress-free while approaching delivery time.

What you should do if dystocia occurs:

Dos	Don'ts
Call a veterinarian for assistance without waiting long for normal delivery	Never try to relieve the cow/heifer at your own effort
If the head of the calf is hanging out, then restrain the cow so that the head of the calf is not injured by friction/dashing on ground or hitting to surrounding objects.	Never pull the protruding legs as it will make the procedure for the attending veterinarian more complicated nor smear ashes, sand, etc. to the protruding legs of the calf in order to make them non-slippery so that someone could try to pull the legs,
	Do not puncture or rupture the water bag if seen hanging down. Rather let it take its own course of time