

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

**What it is:** When the pregnant heifer/cow expels a dead fetus from her womb before attaining full term of pregnancy, it is called abortion.



*Aborted foetus*

## How it affects your farm

- Abortion causes either loss of complete milk yield of one lactation, or yield lesser than expected.
- The heifer/cow may have the possibility of suffering from a number of other reproductive diseases like retained placenta, repeat breeding, delayed post-partum oestrus, infection of the reproductive organs, pyometra, etc.
- There is involvement of higher cost for treatment, maintenance and feeding during the unproductive period.
- It poses a threat to human health since some infectious causes of abortion like Brucellosis are zoonosis that can transmit from dairy animal to humans.
- It makes you lose one calf and eventually a grown up animal with higher monetary value.

**What may cause abortion:** Broadly, causes of abortion are of two types

### a) non-infectious and b) infectious

#### a) Non-infectious:

- **Heat stress-** if you expose the pregnant cow to extreme heat and humidity;
- **Body temperature** -if the pregnant heifer/cow is having high fever;
- **Feeding of mouldy feed/grass-**if you store the feed in a wet and damp place, there will be growth of fungus which may produce toxins that cause abortion;
- **Injudicious use certain drugs-** if you/ local service provider administer some medicines that are not suitable for administering in pregnant animals , it may cause abortion;
- **Severe Trauma:** if the pregnant heifer/cow receives trauma by any physical means, it may cause abortion;
- **Over exhaustion-** if you drive the pregnant heifer/cow for a long distance on foot or if she keeps running/jumping because of fear or being chased by dogs, etc. may cause abortion;

- **Threatened/Habitual abortion-** some heifer/cow habitually abort at any stage of pregnancy without any specific cause.

#### **b) Infectious:**

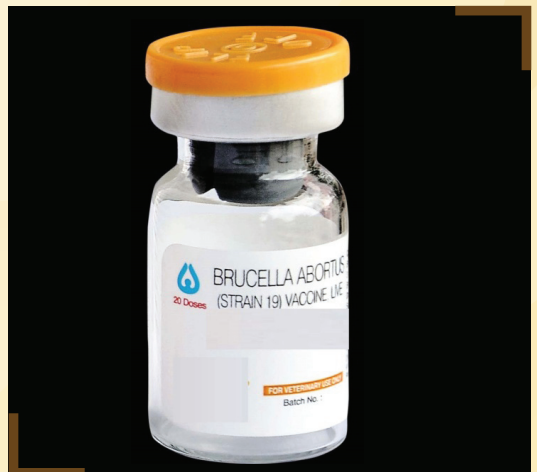
- Infectious abortion may be caused by a number of harmful micro-organisms like- bacteria (e.g. *Brucella* spp), protozoa (e.g. *Trichomonas*) or fungus. In case of abortion with bacterial infection, fever is common symptom in the cow/heifer with occasional retained placenta.

### **Measures to be adopted to reduce the occurrence of abortion**

- Vaccinate the heifers with *Brucella* vaccine preferably within the age group of 4-8 months. This will protect the heifer against brucellosis with a lifetime immunity;
- Keep the floor, manger & watering trough, farm utensils, drainage system and all the surroundings clean and disinfected ;
- Provide clean and wholesome drinking water;
- Keep the pregnant cows a bit away from the others in the herd so that there is least possibility of injury/trauma from other cows;



*Swollen joints in Brucellosis*



*Brucella vaccine*

- Avoid a slippery floor. Floor should be a bit rough;
- Do not expose the pregnant heifer/cow to extreme environmental temperature. Make provision for proper air circulation in the shed during summer so that heat stress could be minimized;
- Keep the feed/grass in an airy and moisture free area.
- Do not feed mouldy feed/grass;
- Do not transport the pregnant cow/heifer for a long distance causing exhaustion;
- Do not administer any medicine without consultation of a qualified veterinarian;
- Keep close contact with the local veterinarian if there is history of threatened/habitual abortion.

### What you should do if abortion occurs

Dos	Don'ts
Call the nearby veterinarian, if any abortion takes place, for post abortion care. Be very careful in handling the cow as well as the aborted materials.	Do not handle the affected cow and the aborted materials with bare hand.
Dispose of all the aborted materials away from the farm/homestead by deep burial.	Do not throw away the aborted materials in the open field, jungle, river, stream, etc.
Keep the affected animals separated from the healthy animals.	Do not bring the other animals of the herd in contact with the affected cow/heifer.
Cull the cow if found infected with brucellosis (confirmed after diagnosis by the attending veterinarian).	Do not retain a cow diagnosed with Brucellosis for future breeding even though she is very high yielder.