

## **Don't Just Do Something – Stand There**

**By Brian Reed DVM, MBA**

“Doc, I have a cow that just pushed out her uterus while I was treating her for milk fever. I still have her head tied back to her leg. Should I just push it back in?” These were the first words I heard a few weeks ago at the start of a busy day. I assured my client I would leave shortly to attend to his cow, but also explained to him a few tips to help him correct the situation safely and effectively.

While preparing to leave home, my mind flashed back several decades to a lesson taught to me by one of my professors at the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine. He would say, “don't just do something – stand there.” He used this play on words from the common saying “don't just stand there – do something,” to teach us not just to dive in, but rather think it through and develop a plan before taking action. This leads to better results, a safer situation for everyone involved, and fewer “I wish I wouldn't have just done that” moments.

During my first year in practice, this lesson came in handy on a prolapsed uterus case I attended on a hot, humid Pennsylvania evening at Robert's dairy farm. Robert had called in with an emergency prolapse, but had decided to do what he could until a veterinarian arrived. When I arrived on the scene, Robert's once white T shirt and jean shorts were almost unrecognizable with various shades of green, brown and crimson all mixed together with sweat and miscellaneous bovine tissues. He and the cow were lying on a grassy hillside, the cow on her side, having a reverse tug-of-war battle. At this point, the cow was winning a lopsided battle.

I decided this was a good time to take the advice of my professor from vet school. I assessed the situation and developed a plan of action that would keep everyone safer and shift the advantage to the human. The cow had been lying on her side with her head uphill. I put a halter on her, pulling her around so she was lying downhill. I then placed her rear legs directly behind her in a frogged leg position. I put her uterus up on a uterine tray for cleanliness and also to allow it to be elevated onto her hocks. I washed the uterus and used some sterile lube to make everything a little more slippery.

To make a long story short, her uterus just about went in on its own once we had gravity, anatomy and lubrication on our side. The look on Robert's face was a combination of gratitude, bewilderment and a touch of frustration. If I remember correctly, his words were something like “you could have made it look a bit more difficult, Doc, to make me feel better.”

A short time after I left home for my emergency call a few weeks ago, my client called to cancel the call, as he was able to replace the fresh uterine prolapse and the cow was up and doing well. I had explained to him how to give himself the advantage in his situation and have a successful outcome that was better for both him and his cow. I urge you to work with your veterinarian to develop safe, humane and effective procedures on your farm. Remember the

importance of, “Don’t just do something – stand there,” as you manage difficult situations on your farm and in your life.