



How Long Should I Wait for My Cow or Heifer to Calve?

Dr. Gentry recommends that any cow or heifer that has been calving without progress for over two hours be examined. In general, any cow or heifer should be making noticeable progress during active labor every 15–20 minutes, with the time frame from seeing the water bag to the calf being delivered occurring within one hour. Any signs of distress from the cow should be an indication to call for assistance.

Early intervention is KEY to a healthy cow and calf. Dr. Gentry recommends every farm have an emergency plan in place; this includes maintaining an up-to-date relationship with a veterinarian.

As spring calving season approaches, new cattle owners can become stressed wondering how they will know when their cow is going to calve and how to recognize when assistance is needed. Some common signs of calving may include:

- An udder that looks full
- Separating herself from the herd
- Restlessness or signs of discomfort
- Vaginal discharge and an elevated tail
- A visible water bag, followed by calf feet or a head appearing
- Active straining or pushing

Any producer who is concerned that a cow or heifer is not progressing through the labor process should contact a veterinarian to have the animal examined. An animal should always be examined by a veterinarian if she has been in active labor for two hours or more to help ensure the best possible outcome for a healthy cow and calf.

Dr. Gentry provides emergency services for her clients within her emergency radius of Athens, TN. If you do not have a current relationship with a field services veterinarian, call Dr. Gentry during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, to schedule an on-farm visit before your calving season begins.