



Monitoring Cows Calving

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Yielding a live calf is the ultimate goal for all breeding programs, whether it's dairy or beef cattle. Although it's a simple goal, sometimes it can be a challenge to get optimal results. Stillbirth rates average 7% in Holstein dairy cows, with first lactation cows being the source of issues for most herds.

To minimize stillbirth rates, three areas of management must be considered. Age at first calving for heifers and most importantly body condition score for when she calves. First lactation cows calving in fat (BCS higher than 4) have a higher risk of having a stillbirth. Managing weight through nutrition and reproductive protocols will help to reduce the risk of stillbirth rate.

Second, managing sire selection and using ProGen mating program to choose sires will reduce the risk of stillbirth. Making sure calving ease is considered for semen going into heifers, as well using the mating program to protect against genetic recessive combinations coming together will help your herd. Using sexed semen on heifers is also seen as a benefit, reducing the chances of having a big bull calf.

The third item to minimize stillbirth is calving management. Knowing when the cow is going to calve, and when to intervene is a critical part to keeping the calf alive. Over the last decade many herds have added cameras over the calving pen to monitor cows going to calve. Although cameras provide some benefit, they need to consistently be monitored to be effective. EastGen recently added a tool called **MooCall** to its product offering to aid our members with calving management. **MooCall** goes on the tail of the cow up to four days prior to expected calving. When signs of calving begins, the device sends a signal to your mobile phone. This helps to provide 24-hour coverage, helping to reduce the risk of stillbirth by being able to intervene faster on difficult calvings. If you're interested in lowering your stillbirth rate, please talk to your EastGen representative on the solutions we can provide.