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## “Twisted Stomach’s” and Transitioning Cows Well

Left displaced abomasums or “twisted stomachs” are one of the most common reasons for surgery on dairy farms. Up to 90% of left displaced abomasums (LDAs) occur during the first four weeks post calving and producers should aim for fewer than three cases per 100 cows. It is possible to achieve rates of less than 1% in herds where close attention to feeding and management is paid during the three weeks prior to and the three weeks post calving. Controlling production diseases at and around calving also reduces the LDA risk.

Even with successful treatment, LDAs result in economic losses related to decreased milk production and fertility, premature culling, and cost of treatment. So prevention is key and prompt diagnosis and treatment, when it does occur, will help to reduce economic losses and the health and fertility impact on the cow. The cow’s calf bed displaces the abomasum during pregnancy, so there is an increased risk of the condition immediately after calving.

### Risk factors

A variety of different nutritional, environmental and health factors can increase the risk of LDAs. Excessive body condition around calving, difficult calvings, and twins have been identified as some of the risk factors. On the nutritional front, feeding highly digestible feeds or low-fibre diets can increase the likelihood of LDAs, as can production diseases including milk fever and ketosis. Signs to look out for include a drop in appetite, depression and reduced milk production. Cows can also be suffering with ketosis. If LDA is suspected, producers should call their vet. The vet will listen to the abdomen with a stethoscope for a ‘pinging’ sound, which is indicative of gas within the displaced abomasum. Rapid identification and treatment will speed up the cow’s rate of recovery and minimise milk production losses.

### Transition management

Prevention is always better than cure. Transition is the major risk period for LDAs, so it’s essential that cows are carefully managed during this time. The LDA risk can be reduced by achieving good rumen fill, with plenty of quality forage, throughout this period.

### Tips to reduce the risk of LDA

- Ensure cattle are not too fat (BCS >3.5) at calving
- Feed high-quality forage
- Feed a TMR, rather than large ‘slugs’ of concentrate
- Ensure there is sufficient trough space to allow easy access to the ration
- Practice good nutritional management to minimise changes and ensure smooth transition
- Prevent and promptly treat production diseases at and around calving including: milk fever, metritis, toxic mastitis, and retained cleansings
- Maximise cow comfort and minimise stress

If you have any questions about your herds health please contact a Parklands vet.

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## Quick Reference: Transitioning Dairy Cows

Transitioning dairy cows well is of vital importance to the whole lactation, below is a quick reminder of some factors to consider. If you have any questions contact a parklands vet.



For more information and advice about improving your transition period, please speak to a Parklands Vet

