

PRACTICE SURVEY OF CERVINE DYSTOCIA

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The Rotorua Vet Club services approximately 165 deer farms with an estimated 11500 adult hinds. The majority of these animals are of the Red Deer type with only a small proportion being Wapiti and Fallow Deer.

Following the very mild Winter of 1985 we were expecting a large increase in the number of deer dystocia cases due to over-conditioned hinds. We were aware that a considerable number of our part-time deer farmers had allowed their hinds to become overfat by failing to restrict pasture intake and the supplementary feeding of maize. With this in mind we undertook a simple survey by asking the seven Vets involved in deer practice to record their dystocia cases. (Fig 1.) Unfortunately for the survey, most of the larger deer farms adopt an easy care approach to fawning by running their hinds in large hilly paddocks with plenty of cover and with a minimum of interference. These properties reported few losses of hinds and fawns. (Less than 1%).

Survey Results

A total of 86 cases of dystocia were recorded in the survey. This was substantially less than expected.

The majority of the fawnings were carried out at night, often working in only very average conditions. The first dystocia case was on the night of the 16th November, with the last being a caesarean on the 7th February, a spread of 84 days. However from the histogram it can be seen that the majority of cases occurred in the first two weeks of December. (Fig 2) That one of our country Vets failed to record a deer dystocia exemplifies the fact that the bulk of fawning takes place over a short period of time and it is desirable not to be on duty for these two weeks!

Of the total dystocia cases 71% represented a problem involving male offspring. Only 33% of all fawns were alive at the time of delivery and a number of these were reported to have died in the following 24 hours. Perhaps this indicates that more ceasareans should have been performed. (Fig 3)

First and second calvers made up only 38% of all hinds assisted. This could be explained by local farmer preference for running mixed aged hinds while selling off high priced weaners and yearlings to newer deer farming areas.

Of the older hinds with fawning problems it was noted that in addition to being overfat a lot of these animals were small framed deer. The wisdom of mating large bodied or "top weight gain" high priced sire stags over these Kaimanawa type hinds is therefore questionable. To avoid overfat hinds few local farmers restrict feed intake in the spring prior to fawning. The normally long cold winters are sufficient to alleviate the problem.

The survey also revealed that several farms appeared to have more than their share of problems. For example - one herd of 75 hinds suffered from seven dystocias a 9.33% fawning problem. Of these, five were in over-conditioned 2 year old hinds. It is also interesting to note that in five of these seven cases, the fawns were in a posterior presentation. One wonders if there is any relationship between over-conditioned hinds and the presentation of the fawn as our small survey recorded that over a third of the fawns were presented posteriorly.

Method of Handling Dystocia

Where possible, dystocia cases were attended to with the aim of minimizing interference and stress on the hind. If crushes were available these were used successfully to restrain the hind. However in most cases several hinds were yarded into a small pen along with the problem animal, who was approached quietly and given a low dose of Rompun 2% IV. This allowed the dystocia hind to be calved while standing. Nonetheless despite all efforts some hinds became crazed and required a considerable amount of patience and tranquillizer before one could commence the fawning.

Deer dystocia can be extremely difficult to correct as many of you know. There often seems to be little room for manipulation and the pelvic bones can feel exceedingly sharp after a long exhausting struggle. As traditional calving chains appear to be too cumbersome in many instances several of the Rotorua Vets have used fine wire and plastic nooses as calving aids with some success. Much care is required to avoid uterine tears and pelvic fractures.

The survey showed that oxytocin and terramycin L.A. was often administered to the hind on completion of the fawning. The use of Recervyl in hind and fawn was noted by many vets to have greatly assisted the handling of dystocia cases.

The majority of the dystocia hinds were released immediately or at nightfall from the deer shed with few reported problems.

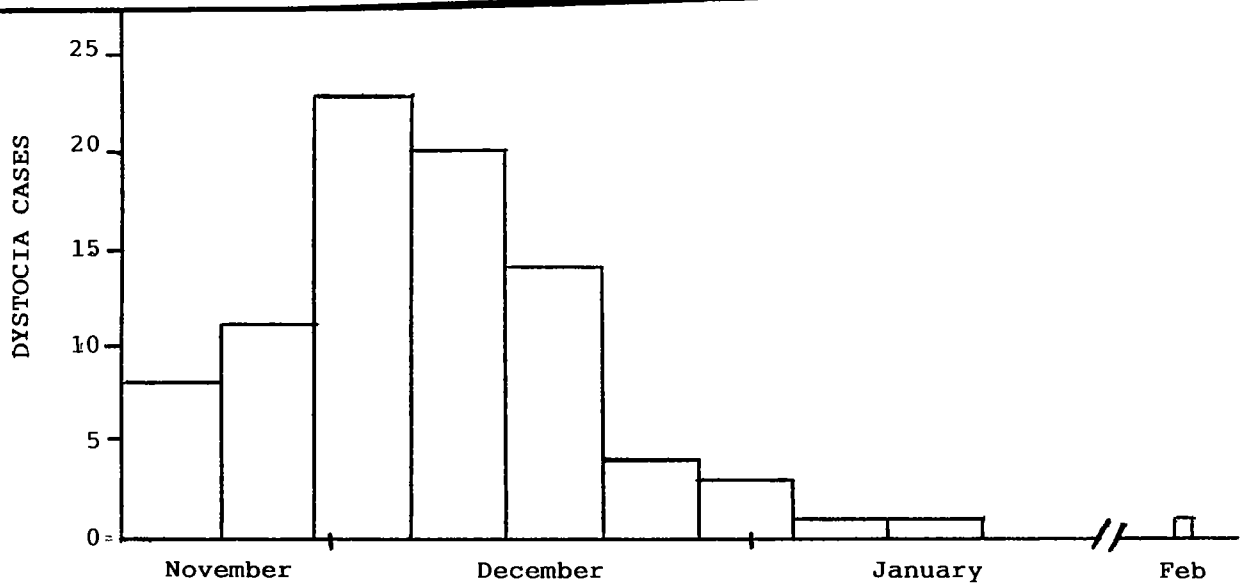


Figure 2. Chronological distribution of dystocia cases

FIG 1.

Example of completed survey sheet.

ROTORUA VET CLUB

CERVINE DYSTOCIA SURVEY

DATE	HIND AGE	FAWN SEX	LIVE/DEAD	TIME	PROBLEM - COMMENT
16.11.85	M.A	F	L	½hr	Small Pelvis
19.11.85	M.A.Fat	M	L	3/4hr	Posterior presentation upside down.
22.11.85	2nd Calv.	M	L	½hr	Anterior presentation head back.
22.11.85	M.A	M	D	½hr	Anterior presentation leg back.
23.11.85	2nd Calv.	M	D	1½hr	Old pelvic fracture caesarean.
25.11.85	M.A.	M	D	1hr	Head back - oversize foetus.
28.11.85	M.A.	M	D	3/4 hr	Emphysematous foetus.
28.11.85	M.A.	M	D	1½hr	Anterior presentation caesarean.
28.11.85	M.A.	M	D	1hr	Posterior presentation
2.12.85	2nd Calv.	M	D	1hr	Hind crazy-calving 3 days. Hind died.
3.12.85	M.A.	F	D	½hr	Easy calving, hind died next day.
3.12.85	M.A.	F	D	½hr	Anterior presentation head flexion.
3.12.85	M.A.	M	L	½hr	Anterior presentation head back.
4.12.85	M.A.	M	D	3/4 hr	Emphysematous
5.12.85	2nd Calv.	M	L	½hr	Anterior presentation - oversize.
6.12.85	1st Calv.	M	D	½hr	Anterior presentation