Successful Therapeutic Management of a Downer Cow

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Abstract
A 6 year old Jersey crossbred cow with advanced pregnancy was observed in sternal recumbency on Instructional Livestock Farm Complex. On clinical examination, cow showed weakness and debility but was active, alert and had normal defecation and urination, could not rise on its feet and confirmed as Downer cow. Combined therapy consisting of parental calcium, phosphorus and B complex along with oral glycerine, calcium supplementation and physical management resulted in recovery of downer cow.

Key words: Jersey crossbred, downer cow

Case History and Observations
A 6 year old Jersey crossbred cow with advanced pregnancy was observed in sternal recumbency in Instructional Livestock Farm Complex, TANUVAS, Madhavaram Milk colony, Chennai. On clinical examination, cow showed weakness and debility but was active, alert and although the appetite was reduced, she eat and drink moderately well, urination and defecation were normal. The body temperature was within normal range (101-102ºF). The cardiac rate was within normal range but respiration rate was elevated (40/min). After two successive treatment with calcium the animal tried to get up but could not rise on its feet and confirmed as downer cow. On third day of sternal recumbency, dystocia problem occurred in animal. Injection Pragma @ 2 ml and Dexamethasone @ 5 ml intramuscularly were given to the animal. Dystocia was relieved successfully, a normal male calf was born and after 8 hrs retained foetal membrane was removed. The animal was in sternal recumbency upto 30 days. Animal made frequent attempt to get up after every treatment but was not able to stand. Characteristic crawling on ground of this downer was noticed. Wound on hip regions developed due to cow lifting device used regularly to lift the animal. The rectal examination revealed no abnormality.

Treatment and Discussion
Initially the animal was treated with two bottles of 500 ml of calborol intravenously, when no sign of improvement was noticed the animal was placed on soft, clean and dry bedding using straw and leaves. Bed sores on knee and hock joints, shoulder, tuber coxae, pastern and thigh regions are apparent in non-alert downers due to continuous pressure of the body.

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and Belamyl @ 10 ml by intramuscular route for five consecutive days. From 10th day the animal was treated with Blotosil @100 ml twice daily for three days to control bloat developed due to prolonged recumbency, Provisacc bolus 2 bolus twice daily for three days. DNS 1000 ml and Dextrose 20% 1000 ml were administered intravenously daily for 10 days. Glycerine @ 100 ml and Ostovet Forte @ 100 ml twice daily were also given to the animal through oral route. Lorexane ointment applied daily thrice for wound on hip region. From 22nd day onwards the animal made frequent attempts to get up. In addition to these combined therapeutic measures, physical management were also provided. A cow lifting device (Fig.1) was made, the animal was lifted (Fig.2) for approximately 30 minutes 2 to 3 times daily until she was able to stand on her own feet. The limb muscles were massaged with Rumalaya Vet cream on alternate day. The animal was able to bear its weight on day 30th and it stood without any support and walked slowly with a staggering gait. There after a drastic improvement was noticed and the animal recovered completely.

The course of the disease is variable in downer cow and it depends on the nature and extent of weakness, quality of the care and comfort, provided to the cow during the first few days. It is reported that 50% of the affected animals get up within 4 days or less if proper care is given. The prognosis is poor for those which are still recumbent after 7 days. Radostits et al. (2000) reported recovery after recumbency for 10-14 day. In the present case it can be concluded that a proper care and management can bring a cow back to life even after 30 days of recumbency. The important management include fluid and electrolyte therapy, bedding and clinical care (Cox and Marion, 1992) and use of cow lifting device.

References