

Specialist Says There Is No Definitive Cause Of Contracted Tendons



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If you run a cow-calf herd and have very many cows, chances are you've had a calf born with contracted tendons. The front legs are the most affected. A producer asked me why he would have a sizeable problem with the condition often referred to as knuckling over on the front pasterns. He has had 3 calves born this fall with the condition. In 2008 he also had 3 head. Typically, his do recover and others who I've asked say they have one every few calvings and with a little help they get over it.

I emailed Craig Payne, extension veterinarian at Columbia and he found an article out of Louisiana State that addressed the condition. The author said contracted tendons are the most common congenital abnormality in calves. It is not considered directly fatal as it does not interfere with vital organs. There is no definitive cause although it is thought that nutrition, intrauterine positioning and genetics may play a

role.

Research has shown that a manganese deficiency in the dam may cause contracted tendons in the calf. Consuming lupine alkaloids, locoweed and poison vetch may be causes. Vitamin D and E as well as selenium play a key role in muscle and tendon growth in the infant calf. Autosomal recessive genes have been known to cause musculoskeletal defects in infant calves.

Perhaps one of the most common theories is that it develops due to insufficient room in the uterus for extension and growth of the tendons. I asked the producer about the relation of the animals and with a little thought and checking of records he did discover one bull was involved in the makeup of the cows and/or the service sire. Like so many problems, we can't always pinpoint the exact cause. I'd be interested in hearing from any of you that have ideas or experiences with new borns and contracted tendons. Δ

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