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Abstract

Neonatal mortality in a pair of identical twin calves: clinical and post mortem observations

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Parturition was induced, on day 278 of pregnancy, of identical twin male Blonde d'Aquitaine calves; the parturition was assisted by gentle traction. The calves died approximately four minutes and eight hours after birth. Detailed post mortem examinations revealed soft tissue hemorrhage, fractured ribs and intrapulmonary amniotic material. The calf which lived for four minutes had persistent fetal atelectasis and a solitary cartilage embolus in a meningeal vein. Atrioventricular valvular telangiectases were incidental findings in both calves.

The observations suggest first that parturient trauma may contribute to neonatal mortality, secondly that the need for intensive neonatal care may be greater than is usually considered appropriate, thirdly that a post mortem examination may reveal unexpected lesions whose effects may contribute to the calves' failure to thrive, and finally that a critical assessment of neonatal pathology is restricted by the lack of data on the perinatal physiological status of the bovine dam and fetus.