

Milk Fever

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I always thought milk fevers were made for veterinary practice builders. Nothing could impress a farmer more than finding his best milk cow down, looking as if she were ready to die, and then having a veterinarian inject a bottle of medicine in the vein and seeing the cow up and eating within less than 30 minutes.

Late one night I was called out to Ellis's farm. The farmer's milk cow was down and couldn't get up. She had just freshened and showed all the symptoms of milk fever. The cow was out in the yard lying in a snowdrift.

The temperature was below zero with a cold north wind, and I had to run the intravenous tubing through a bucket of hot water to keep it from freezing. The farmer was sitting in front of the cow holding a flashlight. He was very nervous and questioned me every two minutes about when I thought the cow would ever get up. He did this constantly all the time the calcium was flowing into her vein. As the bottle emptied, I jerked the needle from the jugular vein, and the cow, who was showing rapid improvement, jumped up to her feet, knocking the farmer into the snowdrift, and running over him. "Doc," he said while looking up from that down position, "You didn't have to answer that last question."