The stand up and first suckling latency of pure and crossbred nellore calves

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The behaviour of the cow-calf pair after birth is important to the beef production systems since it is related to the survival and development of the newborn. The objective of this study was to compare the latency to stand up (TS, min.) and the latency for the first suckling (FSL, min.) in 137 calves from four different groups (purebred Nellore – N and crossbred Simmental x Nellore – SN, Aberdeen Angus x Nellore – AN and Canchim x Nellore – CN), born during the 1998 and 1999 calving seasons. The purebred Nellore calves and their dams were kept in two production systems: intensive (NIS; 5 AU/ha) and extensive (NES; 1 AU/ha). The crossbred groups were kept in the intensive production system. Cow-calf behaviour was recorded by direct and continuous observation from the beginning of parturition until the end of the first suckling. The teats of the cows were classified after parturition according to length (short, median and long) and caliber (small, median and large), and the udder, by conformation (flat, normal and pendulous). The data were analyzed by the least squares method and the model for TS included the fixed effects of month and year of birth, sex, and group. For the analysis of FSL the model included also TT, TC, and UC. The calves from AN group were faster ($P<0.05$) to stand up after birth (22.22 +/- 5.05) than the calves from all other groups (48.88 +/- 4.72, 41.52 +/- 4.31, 41.49 +/- 4.78, and 41.47 +/- 4.31, for NIS, NES, CN, and SN, respectively). FSL was affected by group and TT ($P<0.05$). Again, AN calves were faster ($P<0.01$) to suckle for the first time (34.59 +/- 10.32) than NIS (75.10 +/- 8.69), NES (64.75 +/- 8.69), and CN (72.39 +/- 9.81) but not SN (54.35 +/- 8.65). Independently of group, calves suckled faster when cows had long (49.03 +/- 9.75) and median (55.29 +/- 7.98) TT as compared to small (76.39 +/- 8.97). The results suggest that there are differences among the different groups studied, for TS and FSL, and that short teats in Nellore cows can difficult FSL in newborn calves.

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