

The Saga of the Winter Calf

By Cindi Darling

Most of the time, animal breeders plan on babies arriving at certain times of the year, most often when it is not freezing. This does not always happen, especially if you allow the boys and the girls to co-exist all year. Last month on a particularly cold day while checking stock in the morning, our zebu count was off by one cow. When we got to the shed in that pen we saw a lone zebu cow bolting past us as if we were wolves.



Momma on the run.

When we got to the front of the building, we immediately saw a flat, apparently dead, calf. Nancy got out to photograph it, sex it and put it into the bed of the truck for disposal. When she went to move the stiff, cold carcass, a leg twitched! She immediately grabbed it and ran to the truck. We wrapped the ice cold "carcass" in a blanket and cranked up the heater. Nancy cuddled the body and rubbed her extremities while our office "Mommy," Mayze, cleaned the face, ears and neck.



This photo does not do justice to what was a "dead" and very "flat" calf.

After these ministrations, we placed the calf in the foot well of the truck with the heater cranked up and the blanket tented up to catch the heat. After about an hour, she moved her head into a little more natural position.

We had a busy morning as she cooked under the heater for about four hours before returning to the office. We had stopped and purchased a new bag of Colostrx for her. We doubted that she had been able to nurse, and colostrum is vital for newborn babies. It is also important as you slowly warm up a cold animal to get them warm inside and out. Body temperature on the fly can be checked by feeling the inside of the mouth. It should be warm to the touch.



Mayze cleaning the face, ears and neck.



Ice melting, she is still wet and stiff but a little better.



To our surprise, this little trooper apparently really wants to live. A nipple in the mouth and a little stimulation, and she sucked down an entire bottle on the first try. This is a very encouraging sign and extremely unusual. All too often in these situations, one has to tube feed these newborns.

She is amazing! She has eagerly taken her bottle from the very first day. Unfortunately, like so many bottle babies we start, she is not aware that she is a bovine. She lasted one day and night in the

bathroom and a cage and then transitioned to complete freedom and chose to settle into a dog bed next to my desk with a heater right next to her.

. . . dropping her blanket and getting a little help at balance from the microwave stand and the fridge.



Settled in.



Wandering around outside. Keeping warm with dog coats and sweaters.

She has even attempted to climb into my chair with me. Sigh! The dogs can stand and bark in her face, and she just stands there with an "isn't-that-normal?" attitude.

We named her Zulily, and she is now happily going to spend her summer with a petting zoo. The chances of her ever believing she is a zebu at heart are very slim.



Zulily on 2/26/16 in her new home.