

Anatomical Studies, No. 55.

A Mummified Bovine Foetus.

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A cow D.O.B. 3574 had her last calf, D.O.B. 5005, on 25.1.32 and was served again on 29.5.32 after which date she did not come on heat. As she was a reactor to the tuberculin test she was accordingly slaughtered at the Pretoria abattoirs on 1.12.33. In addition to tuberculous lesions in the thoracic cavity, the uterus contained a mummified foetus, the age of which at death was estimated to be about 105 days. As the period between fertilisation of the ovum and slaughter of the cow was 551 days, it is evident that the dead foetus remained approximately 446 days in utero. Had the cow not been slaughtered the mummified foetus may have been retained much longer for Figuier (De Bruin, p. 125) describes a case where the foetus was only expelled after five years. The corpus luteum verum in cow D.O.B. 3574 was embedded as would be expected. The weight of the specimen described in this note is 327 grams.

As will be noticed in the accompanying figure, the outline of the foetal skeleton is plainly visible, and in the skull the various sutures can be easily distinguished. The head as a whole is symmetrical, presenting no distortion except the nasal region which is concave. The orbits are two hollow cavities, the right being twice the size of the left. On the right, two eyelids can be distinguished, but not so on the left. Distortion of the trunk is accompanied by distortion of the limbs. The left fore-foot lies in the occipital region behind the right ear. The foot of the right fore-limb lies ventral to the larynx. The hind limbs are bent and twisted to such an extent as to conceal the external genitalia but the attachment of the umbilical cord can be seen very plainly. Hair is absent on the whole foetus.

Before the foetus, however, could be distinguished it was necessary to remove the foetal membranes.

It is clear that the following process took place after the death of the foetus. Due to the aseptic conditions that prevailed in the uterus, maceration of the foetus did not take place and mummification set in. This involves the absorption of the foetal fluids. The absorption of the foetal plasma results in the appearance of the foetus as

a dried-out, hard, solid mass consisting apparently of the skeleton, covered by a parchment-like tissue, the skin. The absorption of the foetal liquor results in the foetal membranes being closely moulded on the foetus which consequently bears the impressions of many cotyledons. The foetal membranes also are in a dried-out state and like the foetus a varying shade of brown in colour.

REFERENCE.

DE BRUIN, M. G. (1901). *Bovine Obstetrics*. William R. Jenkins, New York, 1901.

