INTRODUCTION: One of the giraffe at Ain Wildlife Park & Resort (UAE), gave birth to a calf after a prolonged labour period. 72 hours after calving, she had not dropped the placenta and hence we had to intervene and remove it. Retained placenta on its own is not a problem, but it predisposes the animal to infection and complications associated with retained placenta defecates this contaminates the placenta and may be absorbed into the uterus. Also when the animal is lying down the retained placenta gets contaminated with the soil micro-organisms and this may lead to severe metritis and/or tetanus.

The thought of retained placenta and having veterinarians intervene was a major concern, as giraffe anaesthesia is very risky, especially as temperatures were in the high 40’s Celcius (1220F). Fortunately, Al Ain Wildlife Park had acquired a new giraffe Tamer that coincidentally was fully installed the same day we wanted to manually remove the retained placenta.

Procedure: Capture –The giraffe was not conditioned to the Tamer procedure and as such, it was felt that it would take a long to bring her to the Tamer. Surprisingly, it took less than 3 minutes (Fig 1). Once in the Tamer, she was blindfolded to keep her calm (Fig 2). The exact body weight of the giraffe was taken with the aid of the inbuilt scales, which allowed the veterinary staff calculate the correct drug dosage for the animal.

Manual removal of placenta: To manually remove the placenta, the perineum was thoroughly washed with diluted povidone iodine. Wearing arm-long sleeves the hand was lubricated and inserted through the vagina into the uterus between the placenta and the uterine wall. By gently applying traction using one hand and the other hand into the uterus peeling off the placenta from the caruncle attachment, the placenta was removed carefully to avoid damaging the delicate lining of the uterus (endometrium). Thereafter, a sterile tube was lubricated and inserted into the uterus. Diluted povidone iodine was poured through the tube into the uterus (Fig 4). Then intra-uterine pessaries were inserted into the uterus.

Systemic treatment: Long-acting antibiotics were administered intramuscularly. The animal was also given Vitamin E and Selenium.

Blood taken during examination revealed low calcium levels and low vitamin E and selenium levels suggesting that the cause of the retained placenta was nutritional, mainly due to hypocalcaemia and Vitamin E and Selenium deficiency. Subsequently the animal was supplemented with calcium and Vitamin E and Selenium supplements.