



### **What to Expect When Your Mare's Expecting**

After you mare has been confirmed in foal (pregnant), you have some time (~11months) to prepare for the baby. During the first and second trimesters of pregnancy, the mare generally does not require any additional nutrition beyond that of a normal horse. During the third trimester of pregnancy the foal will grow significantly and some mares may require supplementation. Most mares however, only require supplementation during lactation. Lactation is the most energy requiring time for mares and many will drop in body condition score (BCS) as their bodies give everything to the foal.

During pregnancy, your mare will require routine vaccinations as well as some additional boosters. It is recommended to vaccinate the mare at 3, 5, 7 and 9 months of gestation with Pneumabort K (a herpesvirus vaccine). It is also important for your mare to have her "spring" vaccinations 4 – 6 weeks prior to her scheduled due date. This will help her provide some of the necessary antibodies for the foal in the colostrum.

How to know when parturition is approaching:

- Mare is 320 days + days gestation (335- 342 more common) sometimes 1 yr!
- Ventral edema: No clinical significance in prediction of foaling
- Mammary development can occur up to 6 weeks before foaling to the day of foaling.
- Vulvar / perineum relaxation occurs during the last few days of gestation
- Milk electrolytes can be measured and are much more reliable than any of the above physical changes.

There are 3 distinct stages of parturition in the mare:

#### **Stage I: This stage can last 30 minutes to several hours!**

- Stage one of labor can easily be mistaken for mild to moderate colic symptoms:
- The mare may look toward her flank, lay down frequently, roll, switch her tail, and become restless.
- Do not interfere. This is normal behavior as she helps to position the foal.

#### **During Stage I labor:**

1. Foal assumes the correct position: Dorsal – Sacral (foals dorsum is up against the mare's sacrum) both front legs and neck are extended, one leg slightly more cranial than the other.
2. Active uterine contractions begin but obvious straining and labor is not evident.
3. Cervix dilates

#### **Stage 2: (delivery of the foal)**

Once cervical dilation is complete the foal passes into the birth canal.



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- During normal parturition, the beginning of this stage is marked when the mares “water breaks” (rupture of the chorioallantois) with escape of several **GALLONS** of allantoic fluid. This is not to be confused with urination, which may be frequent in mares during stage one labor.
- Separation of these layers without rupture of allantoic fluid is called “Premature placental separation” or “red bag” and is a veterinary emergency.
- Equine birth is normally very fast.
  - 10 – 30 minutes (Keep a stop watch) if significant progression in labor is not seen consistently you have an EMERGENCY!
- You will see obvious abdominal contractions.
- Mare may get up and lay down again to reposition.
- Unless there is any worry of dystocia (difficult birth)... **DON'T MESS WITH MOM!!!** She can do this without you!!!
- Once the foals hips pass through the pelvis, the mare will often rest for 15 – 20 minutes.
- Let the umbilicus break naturally

## **Only interfere if:**

- The foal has not ruptured the amnion (opaque sac surrounding the foal)
- The foal is not breathing normally
- The foal is not able to become sternal

## **Stage 3: (expulsion of the fetal membranes)**

- May take up to 4 hours... any longer is an emergency “retained placenta”
- Uterus continues to contract after expulsion of the fetus in order to:
  - 1) Expel the placenta
  - 2) Stop hemorrhage

## **Rules of thumb (1,2,3,4) for the foal after parturition:**

- Foal is sternal: 5 minutes
- Standing: 1 hour
- Nursing: 2 hours
- Passed meconium: 3 hours
- Mare passed the placenta: 4 hours

Erika Little, DVM, MS  
Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Surgeons  
Great Basin Equine Medicine and Surgery, Inc.  
Gardnerville, NV, 89410