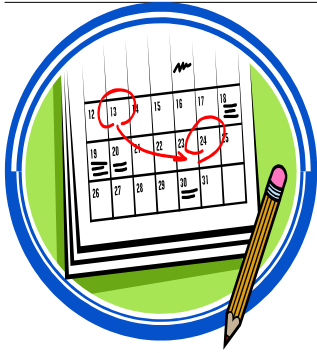


# A GUIDE TO FOALING -

**For the inexperienced breeder**

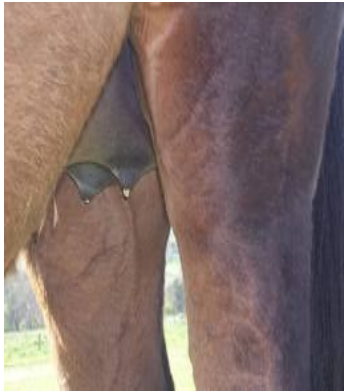
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Prior to foaling it is important to ensure the mare is fully vaccinated. Vaccination at 5,7 and 9 months of pregnancy against EHV is important to prevent EHV induced abortion. The mare should be wormed regularly throughout pregnancy but wormers containing moxidectin or praziquantel should be avoided. We recommend that a flu and tetanus vaccine is given 4 weeks before the estimated foaling date

A horse is pregnant for around 11 months, although this time can vary widely between individuals. The average range is 320-370days, but it is not unheard of to go outwith this range. An early foal is of much more concern than a late foal. We will almost never 'induce' a mare to foal, unless she is starting to have problems.

If you don't know the date of covering of the mare then the foaling date will have to be estimated. 4-6weeks before the date of foaling you should notice some swelling of the udder region (this is known as 'bagging up'). A day or so before foaling it is common to notice a waxy plug at the end of each teat (this is known as 'waxing up'), this is a fairly reliable sign that foaling is imminent.



In preparation for foaling you should assemble a foaling kit which includes: Torch, mobile phone (including charger and our number), tail bandage, clean towels, string, scissors, iodine dip for navel, plastic gloves, headcollar and leadrope for mare, bucket and access to clean water.

It is important that you contact us for advice if your mare starts dripping milk prior to delivery. Some of the vital early milk (colostrum) may be lost if this occurs which may put the foal at risk if we do not intervene.

Mares should be monitored closely when the foaling date approaches. The majority will foal at night, when there is less activity. It is important that mares are monitored unobtrusively, as many mares will delay delivery if there is too much activity. If you have the luxury of a CCTV system then this is ideal, otherwise check the mare hourly when foaling is imminent.

The night before foaling many mares will go off their food, they may appear nervous, or seek separation from other horses. Please remember that none of these signs are absolute, and some mares will foal with no apparent changes prior to delivery.



Mares are generally best to be left to foal alone with intervention only if necessary. Quiet watching from the sidelines is best during the foaling process so help is available quickly if needed.

The early signs of foaling look much like colic signs, the mare may look agitated, paw the ground, look at her stomach or lie down. Shortly after this you should notice a fluid filled sac appear at the mares vulva, when this ruptures this is the 'waters breaking'. After this the mare should lie on her side and be seen to strain. The normal process is the appearance of two hooves, followed by a nose, with the foal in a 'diving position'.



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**Call us if:** The mare strains for more than twenty minutes with no feet appearing, the feet appear but are not followed by a head, only one foot appears, if the foaling process is not complete within 40mins of the start of straining, you see hind feet indicating a breach position.

Please do not assist the foaling unless you have experience of doing so or are directed to by a vet over the telephone. If you are instructed to assist then grasp both front feet and pull gently downwards towards the mares hocks.

The mare should stand up 5-15mins after foaling which should break the umbilical cord, this should bleed very little. If a lot of blood is noticed, tie around the cord tightly with some clean string and call us.

The foal should attempt to stand quite quickly. It is vital that the foal has successfully drunk from the mare within 4 hours of being born. If this does not happen the foal may be at risk of infection due to insufficient colostrum. We recommend a blood sample to determine the immune status.



Maiden mares can be reluctant to allow the foal to drink, they may require restraining in a headcollar, or occasionally sedation to ensure the foal is allowed to nurse. Please call us if the foal is not being allowed to suckle. Very occasionally mares will reject foals, this situation needs to be dealt with promptly to give the foal the best chance.

The last stage of foaling is passage of the placenta, please keep this in a bag for inspection by the vet. If the placenta has not been passed, or is incomplete, within 8 hours of foaling then the mare must be examined as a matter of urgency! Retained placentas can be life-threatening in mares, unlike in other species.



After the foal has managed to stand the navel (stump of cord) must be dipped in an iodine solution.

Within the first 24hrs the foal should pass sticky brown faeces, this is called meconium. Occasionally this can become stuck in the rectum and the foal will require an enema, signs of a meconium impaction are a foal which shakes its tail and strains to defecate but nothing is passed.





The National Foaling Bank are a vital source of information for owners of orphaned foals. Please consider supporting their important work by subscribing to the charity.



*If in doubt- call us! Night or day we are available, even if just for advice.....01233500505.*

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