

EQUINE NEWSLETTER – Spring 2017

Care of the Pregnant Mare

During the 3 months of pregnancy your pregnant mares *nutritional needs* increase. As well as good grazing, she should be fed either stud mix or a stud balancer. It is important that your mare is not allowed to become overweight during pregnancy.

Light *exercise* is important, to keep your mare fit. She should be turned out as much as possible, and can be lightly ridden until about the last month of pregnancy. Keep her in a stable group of horses so that she does not become stressed by new arrivals and there is no competition for feed.

Mare should be *wormed* regularly throughout pregnancy – check the manufacturers data sheet to ensure it is suitable for use during pregnancy.

Vaccinations are important to protect both the mare and her foal from infectious diseases and to help prevent abortion. Transfer of immunity to the colostrum is important for the protection of the foal.

We recommend vaccination for equine herpes virus during the 5th, 7th and 9th month of pregnancy. We also recommend a flu/tetanus booster in the last 4-6 weeks of pregnancy to ensure colostrum immunity.

Foaling

The normal gestation period for a horse is approximately 340 days +/- 2 weeks, although some will keep hold of their foal for longer! Ideally foaling should take place in either a grassy field or large, well bedded loosebox. If foaling indoors, the stable should be thoroughly disinfected and rebedded when foaling is imminent. Straw is the best bedding for the foaling box.

In the last couple of days before foaling you may notice:

- Softening of the udder as it fills with colostrum
- Softening of the pelvic ligaments – the tail head may appear to be elevated
- Wax on the ends of the teats or running milk – this usually occurs within the last 24 hours before foaling

Foaling itself usually occurs at night and can be very fast. Most owners do not see their mare foal. It usually takes 20-30 minutes from the waters breaking to the foal being completely delivered.

Seek veterinary advice immediately if:

- The white amnion or a foot have not appeared within 10 minutes of the waters breaking
- A red bag appearing instead of a white one
- Only one foot is seen
- The feet are upside down
- The nose appears 1st without the feet
- One or both feet are on top of the head.
- The placenta is not passed within a couple of hours of foaling

After Foaling

After foaling, give the mare time to bond with the foal. Dip the navel with strong veterinary iodine. Save the placenta to check it has been completely passed. The foal will stand and begin suckling within an hour after birth. The foal should consume 0.5-1 litre of colostrum within the first 24 hours, peak absorption of protective antibodies occurs in the first 6-12 hours, so feeding quickly gives best protection. The first dung (meconium) is passed within 12-24 hours.

Contact one of our vets if you are concerned about your foal, or if you think it may not have received sufficient colostrum.

Worming Your Foal

Foals are more susceptible to worms because their immune system is immature. Parascaris is the most important worm in young foals. Clinical signs include a dull coat, lethargy, inappetance, coughing, ill thrift and diarrhoea. Foals first worming dose should be at 8-10 weeks of age, using fenbendazole. Worm egg counts should then be monitored every 4-6 weeks until weaning and treatment given as appropriate. We can carry out worm egg counts in house.

Strongyloides is another important parasite that can be transmitted to the foal via the mares milk. We recommend treating the mare with an ivermectin wormer immediately after foaling to prevent transmission of this parasite.

Preventing Foal Heat Diarrhoea

Mares come into season soon after foaling. The hormonal changes at this time often give the foals diarrhoea. We can supply probiotic paste to help the establishment of a healthy gut microflora in the foal – doses should be given on day 0 (after colostrum) and then days 1,6,7 and 8.

Spring Worming

Now spring is here, we need to put a plan in place for worming our horses during 2017. Our targeted strategic approach to worming provides the best balance between giving a worming treatment when required and not overusing wormers which increases the risk of development of wormer resistance. If your horses have not received a tapeworm treatment in the last 12 months, they will need either to be tested or treated for tapeworm. We have tapeworm saliva test kits at the surgery.

Market Vets Equine Worming Scheme

During 2017 we will again be running our equine worming scheme. This scheme takes the worry out of worming your horse, which can be very confusing. Our worm scheme includes 12 months of worm egg counts for your horse with text reminders of when to bring samples in. We will then tell you the best treatment to use, based on the results of the test, and also check that the wormer has been effective. Our worming scheme also offers a discount on Equisal tapeworm testing kits.

For more details, or to join the scheme, please contact Rachel at our South Molton Surgery.

