

## Countryside Veterinary Service PC – Equine Parturition And Complications

- **Gestation Length**
  - Light horses 325-355 days range (335-345 days average)
    - Premature <300 days
    - Immature 300-325 days
    - Prolonged >365
  - Mares as individuals, often repeat with similar lengths of gestation.
- **Signs Of Impending Parturition**
  - **(Some mares may show no premonitory signs)**
    - Mammary development - enlargement usually starts 3-4 weeks prior to foaling.
    - Ventral edema - associated with mammary development and fetal pressure on vessels.
    - Teats fill with colostrum approx. 48 hours prior to parturition
    - “Waxing of teats” - colostrum adhered like beads of honey at teat orifices 24-48 hours prior. Approximately 60-70% of mares “wax”.
    - Relaxation of vulva and pelvic ligaments, 24-48 hours prior to foaling.
    - Milk flow approximately 4 hours prior to foaling. Some mares will leak milk 7-10 days prior, the foals of these mares should be supplemented with colostrums.
    - Restlessness-mares tend to leave other horses, become unfriendly, mild signs of colic, stall walking and appear uncomfortable. Usually within 24 hours.
  - Approximately 90% of mares will foal at night. They can control the final stage of labor.
- **Immediate Signs Of Parturition**
  - **First stage** of labor associated with uterine contraction and pushing chorioallantois (outer layer of placenta) out cervix until it ruptures. Ranges from 10 minutes to 6 hours. (average 1 hour)
  - **Second stage** of labor - time from rupture of chorioallantois until the foal is delivered. Ranges from 2 minutes to 25 minutes. (average 10-15 minutes) The mare is usually down on her side and actively straining with abdominal pressure at this time. With the rupture of the chorioallantois, the thin white amnion should appear at the vulva. Usually one foreleg is positioned slightly ahead of the other and the foals head positioned on top of the forelegs. Any deviation from this position is considered abnormal (dystocia) and requires immediate attention and correction. The amnion may remain intact over the foal until delivered, then the foal will break the membrane with it's forelegs. Assistance with the removal of the amnion with help prevent suffocation. The foal usually lies with it's rear legs remaining in the mare and the umbilical cord still attached. This is normal and

may last up to 30 minutes, and the mare should not be disturbed.

- **Third stage** of labor is associated with expulsion of the placenta. This ranges from 5 minutes to 3 hours. (average 1 hour). Any placenta retained for more than 3 hours requires veterinary attention.

- **Foal Behavior**

- Foal stands - 15-60 minutes (average 30 minutes)
- Foal nurses - 45-135 minutes (average 60 minutes)
- Foal passes meconium (first stool) - (average 2 hours)
- Foal urinates - (average 8 hours)

- **Foal Care**

- Enema 4 times 8 hours apart
- Tetanus within first 24 hours
- Foal shot (antibiotics and vitamins) within first 24 hours
- Worm and 4-way vaccination at 45 days, worm every 30 days until 6 months of age
- Iodine naval at birth (do not use strong iodine preparations, this will lead to umbilical hernias.)

- **Mare Care**

- Worm and 4-way vaccinate 30 days prior to foaling
- Repeat worming after foaling for strongloides spp.
- Tetanus the day of foaling
- Check mammary gland for milk at foaling
- Check placenta to be sure the entire placenta was passed