



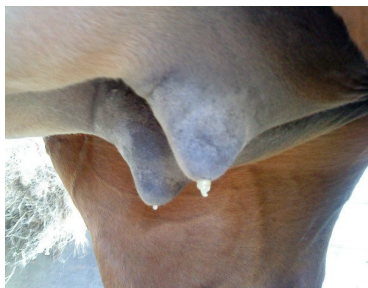
## FOALING SPECIAL

So after a long 11 months, your mare is expecting to deliver her baby. Most mares foal anywhere between 320-365 days. Every effort should be made for you to be present during foaling, however you should quietly observe from a distance. Due to mares normally foaling at night, you can use devices such as baby monitors and foaling alarms to help you keep track of when she might start to deliver. It is also important to have our number 01208 76403 saved in your phone in the event that your mare may need some assistance.

### THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

- The mare's udder begins filling with milk two to four weeks prior to foaling.
- The muscles of the vulva and croup relax. The tailhead may become more prominent a few days prior to foaling.
- The teats become engorged four to six days prior to foaling. "Waxing" of the teats occurs (a yellowish, honey-like secretion [colostrum] appears one to four days prior to foaling).

**Right: showing a mare's udder full and waxing up.**



**Left: Within the last 24-48 hours before foaling the mare's vulva can be observed to swell and relax in preparation to stretching several times its normal size to allow passage of the foal.**

- The mare becomes anxious and restless. She may appear to be colicky. She may kick at her belly, pace, lie down and get up, look or bite at her flanks and sweat. She may frequently raise her tail and urinate. Generally, this is the first stage of labour (however, be aware that colic remains a possibility; if such behaviour is prolonged for more than an hour or two without progress towards foaling, contact your vet).

**STAGE ONE** - Onset of contractions which generally lasts one - two hours. Even in a normal delivery, the mare may stand up, lie down and roll several times in an effort to properly position the foal for delivery. During this phase, contractions move the foal through the cervix and into position in the birth canal. The fetal membranes (allantois) may become visible at the mare's vulva. When the sac breaks, signalled by a rush of fluid, stage one ends. The rupture of the allantoic membrane and rush of placental fluids may be confused with urination.

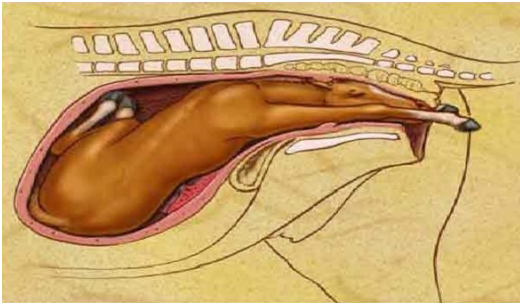
**STAGE TWO** - Is the actual expulsion of the foal. This phase moves relatively quickly. If it takes more than 30 minutes for the mare to deliver, there is most likely a problem. If there isn't any significant progress within 10 to 15 minutes after the membranes rupture, call your vet immediately. If labour seems to be progressing, wait and watch.

### **USEFUL ITEMS TO HAVE TO HAND!**

- String to tie up afterbirth so mare doesn't tread on it
- Gloves/scissors
- Tail bandage
- Fully charged phone and vet numbers
- Bottle and teat
- An antiseptic solution to treat umbilical cord
- Bucket to put placenta in ready for vet to check
- Most important...champagne to celebrate your new arrival!



**NORMAL PRESENTATION** - Resembles a diving position, with front feet first, one slightly ahead of the other, hooves down, followed closely by the nose, head, neck, shoulders and hindquarters.



If you do not see the position to the left, then call your vet immediately. Things you may see could include, nothing, the soles of the feet being upside down (backwards or upside down foal).

### **URGENT ACTION IF YOU SEE A RED BAG!**

One of the most serious complications can be what is called a red bag delivery which is the premature rupture of the chorioallantois. If at any time during stage two you see red/maroon membranes covering the foal as it emerges from the vagina, the placenta must be rapidly torn open. The foal is detached from its blood and oxygen supply and will suffocate without you acting quickly - **DO NOT WAIT FOR THE VET, YOU MUST TEAR THE PLACENTA OPEN.**

Normal membranes that cover the foal are white or yellow and translucent - these may get stuck over the foals nose after birth so make sure to remove them from the nose and mouth.



**STAGE THREE** - Is the phase during which the afterbirth (placenta) is expelled. Most placentas are passed within 1-3 hours after the foal is delivered. If the placenta has not passed within 6 hours, call your vet (or sooner in Draft Horses). A retained placenta can cause serious problems, including a serious infection of the uterus and laminitis. Make sure to tie up the placenta if still coming out of the mare to ensure it doesn't get torn. **Keep the placenta once expelled in a bucket for your vet to examine at the foal check to make sure it is complete.**

### **IMPORTANCE OF COLOSTRUM IN FOALS**

Your foal is born with no immune system, so the first milk from mum is very important to provide your foal with a good passive immune cover for the first few weeks of its life. Without this immune system your foal could be susceptible to picking up infections from the environment leading to sepsis or joint infections.

The foal should receive colostrum in the first 8-12 hours of life. If there is anything that hinders your foal from getting colostrum in the first 6 hours (rejection from mare, poor suck reflex or other conditions) then you need to contact your vet for advice on the next steps. We sell an artificial mare colostrum that should provide your foal with those vital antibodies however this shouldn't replace mums own colostrum. After 12-24 hours the gaps in the stomach close up and the antibodies from the colostrum are no longer able to be absorbed. So you need to act quickly if the foal has not been sucking very well.

#### **AFTER BIRTH A FOAL SHOULD NORMALLY:**

- Sit up in 1-2 minutes;
- Have a suck reflex in 2-10 minutes;
- Stand within 2 hours (average 1 hour)
- Suckle within 4 hours (average 2 hours)
- Urinate by 8.5 hours and pass meconium within 4 hours
- Temperature should be 37.2 to 38.6 C



We always recommend booking your vet to check the mare and foal when the foal is over 12 hours old. We can perform a quick blood test to check that the level of the antibodies in the foals blood is adequate enough to ensure they have a good immunity.

**GOOD LUCK AND ENJOY YOUR NEW ADDITION!**