



WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER

Colic

What is Colic?

- Colic is a broad term for abdominal pain in horses
- It has a range of causes, mainly due to problems within the digestive system
- Colic is an emergency so a vet should be called

Signs 🐾

- Rolling
- Flank watching
- Kicking at belly
- Getting up and down
- Sweating
- Lip rolling
- Reduced appetite
- Reduced faecal output

Causes 🌿

- Spasmodic - this is most common and is pain due to spasming of the gut wall
- Impaction - this is where a blockage has formed
- Gas - a build up of gas can cause pain and can progress to displacement of the gut
- Displacement/torsion - some of the gut has moved into an abnormal position



Foaling

Many mares foal without problems, however it is important to know what is normal, so as to act quickly if needed. Stable cameras can be useful as some mares are very private and try hard to foal when no one is watching!

Before foaling

Mares should stay in the environment you plan for them to foal in for 4-6 weeks prior to their due date. This will help them develop antibodies specific to their environment to pass on to their foals and help prevent disease. Maintaining a routine is also advisable during these weeks. Mares will often “bag up” (increased udder and teat size, wax at teat end) in the 1-2 days prior to foaling, which can be helpful but is not always reliable for timing of foaling. Running/leaking milk prior to foaling is not normal and should be reported to your vet.

Stage 1 Labour

Stage 1 is the onset of labour, when contractions begin and the foal moves into the birth canal. This lasts one to two hours and signs can mimic those of colic, such as rolling, pawing and getting up and down. This is a good time to apply a tail bandage



Treatment

Diagnosis of the possible cause of colic will involve examining your horse and possible further tests if indicated by the clinical exam, such as passing a nasogastric tube into their stomach or carrying out a rectal exam. Pain relief and a medication to relax the guts will be administered, other treatments may be needed dependent on the cause. Some colics require surgical treatment.

from the nose as soon as it is out of the mare. Hooves coming out with the soles up or a visible tail are both signs to call a vet immediately, as the foal may be backwards.

Stage 3 Labour

Stage 3 is the delivery of the placenta, this starts when delivery of the foal is complete. It should take 3 hours or less, and the placenta should be checked for completeness by a vet, so please don't throw it away, or move it with a pitch fork! Retained placenta (or part of the placenta) is potentially life threatening.

After Foaling

After a normal birth foals should:

- Stand within 2 hours
- Suckle within 4 hours
- Pass meconium (black faeces) within 4 hours
- Pass urine within 8 hours

It is vital that the foal takes in adequate colostrum in its first 6 hours of life to develop an immune system. If the foal is unable to latch on or shows no interest in feeding this can quickly become an emergency. Iodine should be applied to the navel immediately, and we recommend a mare and foal vet check within 24 hours.

if safe to do so. Stage 1 ends when when the allantoic membranes break releasing a rush of fluid (sometimes confused with urination) - this is her "waters breaking".

Stage 2 Labour

Stage 2 is birth of the foal, it should take no more than 30 minutes and significant progress should be seen within 15 minutes of the mare's waters breaking. Normally foals are born in a diving position with front hooves followed by nose. The nose will be covered with a cream/yellow membrane which can be removed



On Tuesday 7th March we will be holding an **Equine First Aid Evening**, covering wounds, colic, sudden lameness and bandaging basics. Please call our office to book, as space is limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. We look forward to seeing you there!

