



Waterlane
EQUINE VETS

FACTSHEETS

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING!

Whether you've had 10 foals or you're expecting your first, there's nothing more exciting than a healthy newborn foal.

Firstly, the late pregnant mare should be in good body condition (but not overweight), up-to-date with her vaccinations (especially Tetanus) and intestinal worm control. Mares should ideally be vaccinated in the 4-6 weeks prior to foaling to ensure high levels of antibodies are transferred to the foal through the mare's colostrum.

Signs your mare is close to foaling can include becoming quiet, choosing to stand on her own or becoming restless. Udder development can occur in the weeks before your mare is due, and so is not a reliable sign of an impending foaling. The most accurate predictor is milk electrolyte levels, which change in the 1-2 days before foaling.

Once a mare's 'waters' have broken the foal should be born within 10-20 minutes. If the foaling isn't progressing, or if the presentation of the foal appears abnormal (only one foot, or back feet presented) a veterinarian should be called immediately.

A newborn foal should sit up almost straight away. A foal should be standing within an hour of being born and nursing within 2 hours. Interestingly, filly foals will stand and nurse faster than colts (but only by a few minutes)! The mare should pass her membranes within 3-4 hours of foaling. You should always check that the membranes are intact (see photos) as retained foetal membranes can have disastrous consequences such as laminitis or septic metritis.





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It's important to let the mare and foal bond over the first 6-12 hours with minimal disturbances. A health check, including checking the foals' immunoglobulin (IgG) levels, is recommended at 12-24 hours old. If the foals' IgG levels are low, a plasma transfusion is given to improve the foals' ability to fight disease early in life.

A healthy foal should nurse multiple times per hour in the first couple of weeks, and will go through periods of rest and activity between feeds. Newborn foals are at risk of sepsis (a bacterial blood infection), however if the foal displays abnormal behaviour it may be what is known as a 'dummy foal' (Neonatal Encephalopathy).

If your foal seems disinterested in nursing,

is abnormally quiet, lame or develops joint swelling this is a concern and immediate intervention will ensure the best outcome for the foal.

If you have any further questions regarding your mares and foals please contact us on 01452 770268.