

THE HAYBURNER HERALD

IT'S FOALING TIME!

So you're expecting a foal! This is a very exciting, but stressful time with many variables. This article is written to give you an idea of what to expect, and when you might need to give us a call.

Gestation (pregnancy) length in the mare has a wide range and is considered to be normal between 320-340 days. The birth process in the mare is more rapid and dramatic than in other domestic species. Given the short survival time in utero of the foal after the rupture of the membranes (water breaking), the importance of attending the foaling, which allows for quick assistance in the event of problems, is critical. However, attending your mare's foaling can be a test of patience. The mare has some control over the time of foaling, and most mares foal during the night when the activity of other horses and humans is low. Predicting the time of foaling is difficult, but observation for some external signs of impending foaling can be helpful.

1. Development of mammary glands

a. Milk production: The mammary glands develop noticeably between 3 and 6 weeks before foaling and distend to a full udder in most mares 2-3 days prepartum. Milk is typically dripping from the udder within 4 hours prior to parturition. However, some mares leak milk from a fully distended udder for days or even weeks prior to foaling.

b. Waxing: This occurs in most mares 1-2 days before foaling. It is not a consistent finding in all mares, but when it occurs, the mare is likely to show the same signs at consecutive foalings.

c. Milk changes: The characteristics of the mild secretion may change from an initially scant, clear secretion to a honey-like secretion, and finally to a milky appearance shortly before foaling.

2. Relaxation of the vulva occurs gradually over the last 2 weeks of gestation with the maximum change at 2-12 hours prior to foaling.

3. Relaxation of the sacrosciatic ligaments (tail head area) occurs within a couple days prior to foaling.
4. Ventral edema (swelling) is most common in older mares, and can be seen as early as one month before foaling. This is not an accurate predictor of foaling, and these mares benefit from some form of light exercise to help reduce the swelling.
5. Temperature: Predicting the time of parturition by a decrease in body temperature on the day before foaling has had limited success in the mare.
6. Behavioral changes: Mild sign of colic, including restlessness and sweating, are associated with the first stage of labor.

Parturition is a continuous process divided into three stages. The first stage involves many changes not visible to the observer, such as fetal changes of position and relaxation/dilation of the cervix. Signs of this first stage of labor that you may notice include restlessness, abdominal pain, sweating, and leaking milk. This stage can last from 30 minutes to 4 hours or more, and can be interrupted by the mare and postponed for days. The end of the first stage of labor is marked by the rupture of the membranes resulting the expulsion of allantoic fluid (breaking water).

The second stage of labor involves delivery of the foal, usually in the space of about 20 minutes. Mares generally lay down during delivery, but may attempt to deliver standing if there is activity in the environment. Within 5 minutes of the water breaking, the amnion should appear as a bluish-white, smooth fluid-filled

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February is national dental month!

Horses should have their teeth checked yearly. In the 20+ horse, twice a year. Dentistry should be the first step with any equine nutrition program. It could add years to your horse's life and save you money by not wasting feed. **In the interest of equine health, we will be offering a 10% discount on all routine dental care in the month of February at our facility in St Joseph.** Please call for an appointment.

Springtime scheduling

Our schedule fills up very quickly in the spring. We do have some changes this year. We will be saying goodbye to Dr. Nicole Eller-Medina, but adding a new equine vet to our team! Keep in mind that when you call we need to know specifically what services your horse will require so we can schedule accordingly. We will also be scheduling in our facility more. We would like to schedule all radiographs, castrations,

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De-worm all horses at least quarterly!

The general rule for feeding hay is 2-3% of the horses body weight per day and of course more or less if the horse is over or underweight.

***We have a new toll free number!
1-888-482-4908 and our local number is 320-363-4908.***

EQUINE EDUCATION-NUTRITION

On December 11 we had our first education clinic. Dr. Julie Wilson from the college of veterinary medicine (University of Minnesota) spoke to us about equine nutrition. We will try to summarize it for you.

Horses evolved as a continuous grazer. Plant fiber passes rapidly through a small stomach and into the large intestine where, with the aid of microbes, main digestion takes place. This is also where nutrients are absorbed. We learned that forage (pasture) is optimum at two well managed (rotated and mowed) acres per horse. But of course this is not available to us in Minnesota winters. Our second option is hay. There are 3 basic categories of hay. First we have grasses including: timothy, orchard grass, brome, bermuda, rye, fescue and oat. Next we have alfalfa, which is high in calcium and protein. And lastly we have a mix of grasses and alfalfa or clover. The quality of hay is usually best at 2nd cutting. Moisture, maturity and storage affect the quality. It is best to use a ground level feeder to keep dust and debris from entering the animals respiratory system. The general rule for feeding hay is 2-3% of the horses body weight per day and of course more or less if the horse is under or overweight. When you have two or more horses, place piles 3 to 4 horse lengths apart to avoid competition. When feeding mineral supplements, make sure it is labeled for horses. Nutritional requirements beyond hay and vita/minerals varies from horse to horse. Pregnancy, lactation, breeding, foals, and working horses usually have higher requirements. Concentrates (grains) are oats, corn, barley and rice. There are also mixes with mostly oats and corn with or without molasses, vitamins or minerals. Problems associated with concentrates

is "hot" horses that require large amounts of grain. A suggestion was to use a hay balancing pellet instead (try your local feed store). There are different pellets to balance out different hays and they provide extra protein, vitamins and minerals without contributing to hot horses! As far as supplements are concerned, research dollars spent is minimal. Outcome is often based on consumer response. Some products work on some horses and not others. Dr. Wilson advises starting with a more popular company first and if it works, trying a less expensive product (the more popular company has more money into research and more of a client base for feedback). Your veterinarian can recommend products, and give you the pros and cons. Dr. Wilson suggests these 12 guidelines: 1. Base diet on plenty of long forage 2. Feed concentrates little and often 3. Provide fresh, clean water at all times 4. Feed by weight, not volume 5. Feed individually, based on body condition, temperament and work 6. Use high quality feed and forage, plus appropriate vitamins and minerals 7. Feed at similar times each day 8. Add succulent treats when possible or as treats (apples, carrots) 9. Allow 2 hours after feeding before work, delay feeding 1 hour after work 10. Make diet changes gradually 11. Deworm all horses at least quarterly 12. Consult your veterinarian if any problems or questions.

SPRINGTIME SCHEDULING...

powerfloats, and anything non-routine. It saves you a farm call, sometimes extra charges, and we have the equipment and support if anything should arise!

Due to popular demand, we now have a toll free number! It is 1-888-482-4908 and the local number is 320-363-4908. Please keep in mind you must now use these numbers in order to directly reach our equine clinic. We are not connected to the rest of the clinic.

NEW PRODUCT CORNER

"Fastrack"

The appearance and performance of your horse is dependent upon the proper digestive tract health. Birth, weaning, transporting, environmental conditions, strenuous training, athletic performance and antibiotic therapy can upset the digestive tract. The unique combinations of natural lactic acid-producing bacteria, yeast, enzymes, FOS, specialized proteins, herbs, chelated minerals, antioxidants and specialized products help to ensure a healthy digestive tract and peak performance.

"Quest Plus"

Some studies have shown the incidence of tapeworm in Minnesota is upwards of 90%! New Quest Plus gel combines two compounds, moxidectin and praziquantel, which together control a broad range of equine parasites. Quest Plus gel is the only product approved to treat and control encysted small strongyles and tapeworms in a single dose. Quest Plus gel is only available through veterinarians.

FOALING TIME...

structure between the vulvar lips. The foal is normally delivered with one fore limb slightly in front of the other, followed by the nose. The membranes may be gently torn open to allow the foal to breathe if they do not break on their own. If a red, velvety membrane appears at the vulvar lips, the foal is being delivered in the intact chorioallantois, which is abnormal, and this membrane must be gently torn open to allow the delivery to continue.

The third stage of labor involves expulsion of the placenta (afterbirth). Following delivery, the umbilical cord remains intact. It is normally ruptured about 1 inch from the abdomen of the foal, either by the mare standing up, or the foal struggling to stand up. No assistance is needed to separate the cord from the foal, but the stump of the umbilical cord should be dipped with 0.5% chlorhexidine (Nolvasan) solution or 2% iodine shortly after birth. The placenta should be expelled within three hours or less, and if it is not, corrective measures must be taken by your veterinarian. Retained placentas past 3 hours can cause such things as uterine infection and laminitis (founder).

There is a lot to think about, but remember that most mares have no problems and can handle everything just fine by themselves. Some maiden mares may need a little encouragement to accept this new little creature that's depending on them. It is a good idea to have your equine veterinarian out sometime during the first 24 hours to examine it, draw a small blood sample to make sure it has received the protective antibodies it needs from colostrum, and check the placenta for completeness. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call the clinic.

WEST NILE UPDATE

Horses need to be vaccinated for West Nile 3-4 weeks before mosquito season to be fully effective. The University is recommending vaccination for West Nile Virus in February or early March (with your other spring vaccinations) and again in July for previously vaccinated horses (Unvaccinated horses will require a booster 3-4 weeks after their first and again in July). Pregnant mares should be vaccinated 4-6 weeks prior to foaling. The foal will then be protected for 3 months from the antibodies in the mares

colostrums. At 3 months foals will require the vaccination and booster at 4 months. Foals born to unvaccinated mares should start at 8 weeks with a booster in 3-4 weeks.

DON'T FORGET!

Pregnant Mares

Your pregnant mare should be vaccinated for Rhinopneumonitis (Pneumabort K) at 5, 7 and 9 months of gestation to protect against viral abortion. Also, to ensure protective levels of antibodies in colostrum, give your mare her regular spring vaccinations 4 to 6 weeks prior to her due date.

Lyme Disease

Remember to check your horse for ticks. We had quite a few cases of Lyme disease in horses last year. Some of the clinical signs are: low grade fever, stiffness or lameness in more than one limb, muscle tenderness, swollen joints, lethargy and behavioral changes. It can be treated with antibiotics over a 1 month period or more. Some prevention is to remove the ticks within 24 hours. Frontline spray has been commonly used with good results, but is not approved for horses (we have had no adverse effects reported).

We can special order barn cameras starting at \$370 to help you "keep watch" over the expecting mother!

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If you rotate your deworming products, make sure you rotate the deworming agent, not just the brand names. Many of the brand names are the exact same product thus the horse will still build resistance to the chemical. Consult your veterinarian for the best deworming program for your horse. Age, infestation, and type of turnout play major rolls in parasite control. Don't forget your foals!

Do you need deworming products?

We have a full line of equine dewormers available. Let us know when you make your appointment and we can bring them right to your barn door!

We do have Equine first aid kits available-full of items you need for an emergency!

We have named the newsletter!

We would like to announce the winner of the "name the newsletter" contest! We had many very good ideas, but in the end we all agreed on "**The Hayburner Herald**" submitted by Sherry Olson along with her horses "Cola" and "Prince". Thank you for all of the submissions, we enjoyed them!