



MCKEE·POWNALL  
Equine Services  
www.mpequine.com

## What to Do When your Mare is Foaling

**Remember, every mare is unique and these are just general guidelines. Please do not hesitate to call and ask questions if anything seems abnormal OR if you're just not sure! We're here to help!**

### **The last few weeks of Pregnancy:**

- **The udder begins to fill with milk about 2 weeks** prior to foaling – if this happens before 320 days pregnancy please contact your veterinarian!
- **Muscles of the vulva and croup relax the few days** prior to foaling
- **Waxing of the teats occurs 1-4 days** prior to foaling
- Some mares will leak milk for a few days before foaling à critical colostrum can be lost!! → Collected and store frozen if possible
- Thin straw coloured fluid changes to milky white à thickens and becomes more yellow/orange indicating good quality colostrum
- **Colicking broodmares should always be taken seriously, as late term and early post-partum broodmares are more at risk for colon displacement**
- Nothing replaces live foal watch
- Keep paper record of days and times of anything you notice – these records are helpful if we encounter problems later on

### **Stages of Labour during Foaling**

#### **Stage 1 of Labour (30min – 4 hours)**

- Your mare might begin to **act colicky, lie down, sweat**. Look at her flank, posture, check tail tone, urine/urination
- Uterine contractions are increasing and the foal is rotating position to enter the birth canal
- During this time you can clean your mare's perineum and udder with warm water and wrap the tail
  - Be careful not to wrap too tightly or to leave the wrap on too long!!
- The chorioallantoic membrane ruptures (**water breaks**) and allantoic fluid leaks out – you should see a glistening grey-blue sac over the foal.
- If you see a red velvety layer you could be having a “red bag” foaling – contact your vet immediately for further instruction, and be prepared to cut the red bag

## Stage 2 of Labour (20-30min)

- The foal begins to pass into the birth canal and there are intense uterine contractions
- The mare will often **lie on her side or stand up/lie down again**
- You should see a **glistening white/grey sac** (the amnion) begin to protrude from the vulva → The **foal should be delivered with one front foot in front of the other, then the head**
- If this continues for more than 20 minutes without any signs of a foal **CALL THE VET**
- Once the foal's hips have passed through the pelvis the mare will often rest for 15-20 minutes → as long as the amnion has ruptured, the foal is breathing normally and is lying in sternal they can be left undisturbed
- The **umbilical cord is best left to be ruptured naturally – not cut! A hand can be held around the umbilicus of the foal as the mare pulls away to aid in tearing without damage to the foal.**
  - TEAR instead of cutting the cord. Speak with your vet regarding this technique

## Stage 3 of Labour (30min – 3hours)

- Expulsion of the placenta and fetal membranes
  - The placenta can be tied up to itself to keep the mare stepping on it and prematurely tearing
- **\*\*Be sure to KEEP the placenta so we can confirm it has all passed!!\***

## Foaling Emergencies!

### “Red Bag” foaling

- If you see a **red bag protruding from your mares vulva** where there should be a grey sac immediately call your veterinarian!
- This means that the inner sac has ruptured and your foal is not getting appropriate oxygen
  - This **red sac needs to be ruptured immediately using your hands or a blunt object!!!**

### “Dummy Foal” – Neonatal Maladjustment Syndrome / Perinatal Asphyxia Syndrome

- Thought to be related to hypoxia → The brain is deprived of oxygen during birth
- Foal is **weak or unable to stand** without assistance
- Does not appear to recognize dam, poor suckle reflex or **unable to figure out how to nurse** (often suck the legs or flanks instead of the udder)

### The Rule of 3

- 1) The foal should **stand** within **1 hour!**
- 2) The foal should **nurse** vigorously within **2 hours!**
- 3) The mare should pass **her placenta** within **3 hours!**

\*If any of these seem delayed call your veterinarian!

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**Foals can deteriorate very rapidly!!  
Especially if they are unable to nurse and  
get severely dehydrated very quickly!**

**Do not hesitate to call your veterinarian with  
any questions or concerns regarding your**

## Problems Urinating or Defecating

- **Urine dripping from umbilicus** instead of penis/vulva
- If the foal shows any signs of colic (rolling, laying on his back)
- If the foal appears to be **straining to urinate/defecate** or has **not passed any manure in the first 3 hours**

**New foals and post-parturient** mares should have their **temperature taken twice daily!** Keep a record of temperatures and call if either the mare or foal is over 102.0 F/ 38.8 C

## **Don't forget the Mare!!**

It is just as important to **check over the mare after foaling!**

- A difficult foaling can cause injury to the vulva requiring repair
- Watch her closely for signs of colic, we just made a lot of room in her abdomen and sometimes she can get colon gas distention or her gut can move around (displacement or even twist)
- Watch closely for signs of **depression, going off feed, fever, discomfort, or heat in her feet** that may indicate she has an infection
- A small amount of watery red/brown discharge with no odour is normal for the first 4-5 days after foaling

**My Veterinarian's Name:**

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**Phone Number:**

**We strongly  
recommend a  
new foal exam  
within the first  
24 hours of life**