

Care of the Pregnant Mare



The pregnant mare needs special management considerations in order to optimise the chance of the successful delivery of a healthy foal. Attention must be paid to feeding, general health care, vaccination and the prevention of infectious disease. The length of pregnancy is very variable between mares, the average being 340 days and most mares will foal in the two weeks before or after this date.

General management

Feeding requirements increase slightly in the last third of pregnancy, when feeding a stud mix or stud balancer is recommended.

Maintain your mare in moderate body condition. Overweight mares have more problems foaling and an increased risk of developing the potentially fatal disease hyperlipaemia in late pregnancy.

Keep the mare in a stable group of mares isolated from other horses that are regularly competing or mixing with others. This reduces the risk of stress, injury and the introduction of disease.

If your mare is going to foal at stud or at another premises move her at least one month before foaling to allow her to build up immunity to the new surroundings.

Worm regularly during pregnancy; check that the wormer is licensed for use in pregnant mares.

Regularly check over the mare including looking at her udder and vulva for any signs of swelling or discharge.



REGULARLY CHECK THE MARE'S UDDER

VACCINATION

Ensure your mare is vaccinated up to date for equine influenza and tetanus.

A booster vaccination for tetanus should be given three months prior to foaling to boost the antibody level in the colostrum (first milk).

Equine Herpes Virus (EHV) can cause abortion in the late pregnant mare. Vaccination in the fifth, seventh and ninth month of pregnancy can help to reduce the risk.

Rotavirus can result in severe diarrhoea in foals where large numbers are kept together e.g. at a large stud. You can help to protect the foal by vaccinating the mare in the eighth, ninth and tenth month of pregnancy so that she produces antibodies in her colostrum.

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH PREGNANCY

Twinning

Twin pregnancies are not uncommon; however, sadly, live healthy twin foals are fairly rare. Most mares lose the pregnancy or the foals are born weak and usually don't survive. Early ultrasound scans can detect twins giving time for intervention.

Loss of pregnancy

There are many reasons why a mare might lose a pregnancy; many of them beyond our control including developmental problems, chord and placental problems. Some losses can be prevented by minimising stress and protecting against infectious disease like Equine Herpes Virus.

Lameness

Lameness issues can worsen during late pregnancy due to increased weight carrying.

Hyperlipaemia

Overweight mares in late pregnancy that have a reduced appetite for any reason are particularly at risk of this potentially fatal disease.

Placental inflammation

Can be caused by viral or bacterial infection.



KEY POINTS: PREVENTION OF PROBLEMS DURING PREGNANCY

- Good general health, management and regular exercise.
- Do not allow the mare to become overweight.
- Identification and appropriate management and treatment of high risk mares.
- Ultrasound scans at 15-18 and 24-30 days to detect twins.
- Vaccination for EHV.
- Regular checks for early detection of health problems.



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