



THE RIVERS EQUINE VETS

What To Expect When Expecting (Equine Edition)

My mare is in her last trimester what do I need to do to get her ready for foaling down?

- Vaccinations → tetanus prophylaxis 6 weeks prior to foaling down, maintain Hendra virus prophylaxis (some studs require equine herpes virus vaccination – consult your veterinarian)
- Worming → regular worming protocol with last worming recommended 4 – 6 weeks prior to due date
- Housing → placed in foaling environment 2 – 3 weeks prior to expecting foaling date
 - Clean adequate room, quiet and away from stressors (ideally 12ft x 12ft in size)
 - Straw preferable over shavings
- Nutrition → It is recommended that mares are fed a well-balanced ration diet and in the last trimester (last 3 – 4 months) of pregnancy it is recommended to feed 1.5 times maintenance. This will increase to 2 times maintenance once the foal is born in early lactation. It is recommended to provide good quality leafy hay ab-lib throughout the last trimester and early lactation
- Miscellaneous → Caslick removal 2 – 4 weeks prior to foaling down

What should I have on hand when my mare is close to foaling?

It is always recommended to have a “foaling kit” on-hand (enquire for The Rivers Equine Foaling Kits):

- Head torch
- Tail wraps
- Disposable gloves
- Clock/ stopwatch (keep a check of time since birth)
- Chlorhexidine/ betadine
- Cotton wool roll
- Garbage bag
- Foal enema
- Stethoscope



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What are the signs that my mare is close to foaling?

- Mammary gland development – can begin as early as 8 months gestation
 - There is NOTICEABLE enlargement 2 – 6 days prior (top right photo)
- “Waxing-up” – this is actually small droplets of colostrum and this occurs 2 – 4 days prior (bottom right photo)
- Vulval conformation changes – swelling, relaxed “flabby”, elongation and increased space between the labia
 - NOTE: there should be no vaginal discharge present until imminent parturition
- “Dropping” – relaxation of the abdominal and pelvic ligaments
- Behavioural changes – pacing, flank watching, flehmen response, lying down, “nesting”, pawing at ground and more



My mare is showing signs of imminent parturition what do I need to look for?

- The mare will undergo THREE stages of parturition:
 - STAGE I → Coordinated Uterine Contractions
 - This is where the mare can be seen expressing different behaviours such as holding her tail out, getting up and down, looking at flank and many more behaviours that can easily be confused with colic
 - DO NOT disturb the mare during this stage
 - This stage normally takes up to 1 hour





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○ STAGE II → Foal Delivery

- This is initially seen as the amniotic sac (white bag) that will protrude from the vulva of the mare
- This will then be followed by normally one or two front limbs and shortly after the nose of the foal (this is normal presentation of the foal)
- The foal will then be delivered within a short period of time – normally in normal presentation assistance is not required, however, it is recommended to be present for this stage of the pregnancy in case of complications.
- This stage normally takes no longer than 30 minutes



○ STAGE III → Expulsion of Foetal Membranes (Placenta)

- The placenta should be expelled within 3 hours in its entirety
- Once expelled – DO NOT throw this away and save for examination

The foal has been delivered, now what?

• Mare

- Check the mare's vulva for injuries
- Monitor for placental expulsion (within 3 hours) – Keep and examine the placenta in entirety
- Allow the mare to bond with the foal (particularly if maiden mare)

• Foal “1-2-3 Rule”

○ STANDING – 1 HOUR

- Greater than 2 hours – call your veterinarian

○ SUCKLING – 2 HOURS

- Greater than 3 hours – call your veterinarian

○ DEFAECATION – 3 HOURS

- Greater than 3 hours give enema
- Given enema and no defaecation within 15 minutes of treatment – call your veterinarian





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- URINATION – 6 – 10 HOURS
- Umbilicus
 - DO NOT CUT THE UMBILICUS
 - This will break naturally at birth
 - Topical treatment 2 – 3 times daily for 3 – 5 days with 0.5% chlorhexidine solution or 1% iodine (Betadine)

I'm worried my foal hasn't had enough colostrum what should I do?

- Call your veterinarian to arrange a simple IgG test to assess adequate passive transfer of immunity from the mare
- This test is performed between 12 – 24 hours after foaling

My foal is up drinking, defaecating and appears normal should I get a veterinarian to assess him/her?

- This largely depends on your experience and competence
- If you are inexperienced or unsure then call your veterinarian to check the foal over thoroughly when suitable within 24 hours.

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