

Foaling Time

Foaling can be an exciting but worrying time for horse owners.

Here is a quick reminder of what to expect when your mare is foaling...



1. Prior to foaling the udder swells and the first milk or “waxing” may be seen at the teats. The vulva lengthens as the pelvic ligaments relax.
2. The first stage of labour can last from ½ to 24 hours. Signs may include sweating, frequent urination and defaecation, loss of appetite, nervousness, tail twitching or lifting, getting up and down, rolling and flehmen response (lifting of the upper lip). There should not be any abdominal straining in Stage 1 and it ends with the appearance of the foetal membranes.
3. Stage 2 - delivery of the foal is dramatic and involves strong abdominal contractions. Starting with the appearance of the balloon-like foetal membranes, a shiny blueish-white bag filled with fluids, next the foal’s front feet should appear, one slightly in front of the other and then the foal’s nose resting on the cannon bones, the rest of the foal should follow rapidly and the process rarely last more than 30 minutes. If the foal is born within the bag, you may need to break the membranes to allow him to breathe but this normally happens naturally as the foal moves. A fleshy red bag appearing before the foal indicates placental separation and is an absolute emergency, ring for advice immediately. If stage 2 last more than 20 minutes without progressing call for a vet.
4. The period of tranquillity – immediately after birth the mare and foal rest, often with the foal’s feet still in the birth canal. This is an important stage for bonding and allows the blood within the placenta to transfer into the foal before the cord is broken. Try not to disturb them.
5. Stage 3 – delivery of the placenta (cleansing), should occur within 4 hours of birth otherwise call the vet. Keep the placenta safe in a bucket, so it can be checked by the vet at the foal check. Retained placenta is a life threatening condition in the mare.

Foaling usually occurs without human interference and is often missed but we advise you check your mare regularly in the night when she is close to foaling as most foals are born between 12 and 6am.

MKTG/Equine/Collateral/EquineInformation/Foaling Time



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