



Lilydale Clinic
484 Maroondah Highway
Lilydale VIC 3140
P (03) 9739 5244 F (03) 9735 5509

Yarra Glen Clinic
28 Bell Street Yarra Glen VIC 3775
P (03) 9730 1569

www.yarrarangesvet.com.au
clinic@yarrarangesvet.com.au

Care of your foaling mare

The gestation period of the mare is 330 days (approximately 11 months) however this is variable and mares can foal normally up to two weeks before to 4 weeks after their 'due date'. If your mare seems healthy and well during this period there should be no need to worry, however if she is unwell in anyway it is best to have her checked by a vet.

In the later months of pregnancy, one of the most important things to monitor for is any vulval discharge or 'bagging up' (forming an udder) prior to the last 2 weeks of pregnancy. This can indicate placentitis (infection of the placenta) and requires treatment with antibiotics to prevent the foal being born sick. The mare should be wormed as per normal with a 'mectin' based wormer that is safe for use in pregnant mares, and she should receive a 2in1 (tetanus and strangles) booster vaccination 1 month prior to foaling to ensure immunity is passed on to the foal in colostrum, and that she is protected from tetanus during foaling.

There are 3 stages of labour when you mare begins foaling -

Stage 1 – This is when the foal is positioning itself for birth. The mare may look uncomfortable and be restless, getting up and down.

Stage 2 – This is the actual delivery of the foal. This process is explosive and should not take more than 10-20 minutes. If the mare is straining and the foaling is not progressing, or it is taking longer than 15-20 minutes for the foal to be born, please call our vet immediately as this could indicate an emergency with the mare or the foal. The foal should be born in a clear sac. If the foal is being born in a bright red, velvety bag this is a “red bag” delivery where the placenta has separated and the foal is being starved of oxygen. This is an emergency and a vet should be called immediately.

Stage 3 – This is when the mare is passing her placenta (afterbirth). This should be completed within 3 hours. If you are not experienced in assessing the placenta to see if it is intact, keep it for our vet to check, as any retained placenta (even a small tag) can make the mare dangerously unwell. If the placenta is not passed within 3 hours it is an emergency – call us immediately.

Once the foal is born it should appear to make attempts to stand and suckle from the mares udder. The golden rule is that the foal should be standing within 1 hour and drinking by 2 hours post birth. Any deviation from this could indicate a sick foal. The foal must ingest ALL of its immunity through the colostrum (first milk) within the first 8-12 hours of life, as it will receive no transfer across the placenta like in other species. If the foal doesn't receive enough colostrum it will be susceptible to infection and may become very unwell. A test called an IgG test (blood test) can easily be performed and is recommended to ensure the foal has received enough colostrum. A plasma transfusion is essential if the IgG level is too low.

In general we recommend a vet visit at the time of foaling if there are any concerns, otherwise a mare and foal check up, including assessment of the placenta and a foal IgG test about 12 hours (next day) post foaling.

If you have any questions please call the clinic on **9739 5244** and speak to one of our experienced horse vets.