



FOALING FACT SHEET

Understandably, many owners worry about their mare foaling and the possible complications. The good news is that the majority of mares give birth with no complications and the whole process can be over in around 15 minutes! Many owners will want to be present during the foaling so this factsheet can give you an idea of what to expect from a foaling mare.

The average gestation length (pregnancy length) in mares is 335-340 days. This can range from 320-370 days.

Where should I put my mare to foal?

Mares need time to acclimatise to their foaling environment so we would suggest introducing them to the foaling box or area 2-3 weeks before the expected due date. It is important, however, to allow the mare to gently exercise in the lead up to foaling - especially if she normally lives out.

The most important things about a foaling area is that it is **clean, dry, reasonably quiet and that there is adequate space**. It is perfectly reasonable during the Summer months to allow a mare to foal outdoors in a grassy paddock, but during the colder months we would recommend putting mares into a foaling box. The minimum dimensions for a foaling box are 14' X 14'.

Parturition (the foaling process) is divided into 3 stages.

EARLY SIGNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Udder development 4-6 weeks before foaling• Milk let-down 4-6 days before foaling• Yellow crust ('waxing') on teats 1-2 days before foaling
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STAGE ONE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normally lasts 1-4 hours • Getting up and down • Pawing the ground • Urinating often • Sweating
STAGE TWO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>WHEN THE FOAL ACTUALLY APPEARS!</u> • Usually takes 10-30 minutes • The mare should be left to complete this stage on her own. • The umbilical cord of the foal will break following it's birth - this should be dipped in iodine to prevent infection. This should be repeated frequently during the first few days of life.
STAGE THREE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This stage is where the mare will pass the placenta. • Mares should expel the placenta within 3-4 hours • Placental retention is a serious problem so call the vet if the placenta has not be expelled in 5-6 hours • We recommend checking the placenta for any holes or keeping the placenta for the vet to check to see if any has been retained.

DEALING WITH A NEWBORN FOAL

A newborn foal will often stand within minutes and should be suckling within 2 hours. It is incredibly important that a foal receives around 2 litres of colostrum within 8 hours of being born. This is to ensure that the maternally derived antibodies found in the colostrum and passed onto and absorbed by the foal. The foal should also pass meconium (the first faeces passed after birth) within 4 hours.

WE WOULD RECOMMEND THAT ALL NEWBORN FOALS AND THEIR MOTHERS SHOULD BE CHECKED OVER BY A VET 24 HOURS AFTER BIRTH. USUALLY THE VET WILL ALSO CHECK THE PLACENTA SO PLEASE KEEP THIS UNTIL WE COME TO VISIT!

There can, of course, be complications during foaling or complications with the newborn foal. If you have any worries during or after foaling then do not hesitate to phone us.