

Esk Veterinary Services Fernvale Vet Surgery



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THE FOALING PROCESS

PRE-FOALING OBSERVATIONS:

Udder Development

- Variable with respect to foaling time
- Usually waxes within 48 hours
- Unpredictable

Pelvic Ligaments and Muscles Around Tail

- Marked softening, slackening
- Usually within last 48 hours

Vaginal Conformation

- Usually relaxes and elongates within the last 12-24 hours
- Cervical plug (light pink mucoid discharge) generally occurs within the last 24 hours but don't usually see it

Behavioural Changes

- Usually reduction in appetite and restless or 'nesting' behaviour occurs in last 24 hours
- Should remember that majority of mares foal between midnight and dawn
- Any mare foaling in daylight should be regarded as probably in trouble



GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

- In horses a generally rapid process, ie 5-30 mins
- Very powerful, violent & unforgiving if allowed to go wrong
- Once it begins – should be progressive ie lack of progress for 5-10 mins may mean trouble – phone veterinarian for preliminary discussion

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THE ACTUAL FOALING PROCESS:

- 1) Often foal lying down but not always
 - Begins by increase in restlessness, mare getting up and down
- 2) Mare will usually settle on the ground and begin contractions
 - First thing to appear is usually the fluid bag
- 3) A few strains, one or two feet, either together or close to it
 - Front feet with soles down is normal
 - Upside down feet = RING VET NOW
- 4) Feet will come out 20-40cm and then the nose should appear about knee level
 - Things should be progressing reasonably rapidly from this point
 - No progress for 5 mins = touch base with vet
- 5) 90% of mares will expel foal in a few minutes with a couple of contractions
- 6) Foal often lay down with their back legs still in mare, while the mare rests. Do not disturb mare other than to make sure membranes are off the nose & foal is breathing normally
 - This rest period is important as foal is still attached to cord and is absorbing blood from membranes, this can last up to 30 minutes
- 7) Foal expulsion completed, cord breaks and mare will get up

POST FOALING:

- Foal usually standing within 90 minutes
- Foal drinking from mare within 4 hours
- Mare usually expels afterbirth by 6 hours, if membranes still attached at this stage = phone vet
- Watch for manure from foal (meconium)
- Watch to see if foal urinating normally
- 24 hour post foaling check recommended for Tetanus protection and blood sampling to check IgG levels