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The Pregnant Mare

The Early Days:

The earliest days of the pregnancy are the most fragile. There is a 10-15% chance that an embryo will be absorbed by the mare's body. If this happens, it is not detectable from the outside, except that the mare will come back into heat. Stress, illness, uterine infection, low hormone levels, twins, and other factors can cause early embryo loss.

By the 15th or 16th day after fertilization, the fluid (the vesicle) around the embryo can be seen with an ultrasound. This is the best time to have the mare checked for twins. This will allow us to eliminate one of the embryos, allowing the other to develop. This is done because:

- In 95% of mares with twins, one or both embryos are reabsorbed or aborted during the first 60 days. However, waiting to see if this occurs naturally could delay or interfere with a subsequent successful pregnancy.
- If the twins survive past 60 days they are usually carried until mid-gestation and then are aborted at about 8-9 months. If they are carried to term then one is very small and usually both will die shortly after birth.

Using Good Judgment

You should avoid stressful situations whenever possible so the mare will be more likely to maintain normal hormone levels. Proper health care is essential to having a healthy mare that can carry a foal to term. You should only transport your mare when necessary. Avoid exposing your mare to large numbers of horses. Provide adequate nutrition like good quality hay and a complete feed or grain designed for pregnant mares. Do not give any medications without checking with your vet first. Follow the guidelines for vaccines and de-worming

Coasting Through Middle Pregnancy:

During the first 7 months you do not need to feed a pregnant mare any differently than a non pregnant mare. She will still benefit from light to moderate exercise. Don't forget to start her on the pneumabort vaccine at 5 months.

The Last 4 Months:

In the last stages of pregnancy the mare's nutritional needs increase because of the rapid growth of the foal. Nutritional supplements are usually not necessary. Extra amounts of good quality hay and a small amount of concentrate is all she needs. Exercise should be light. Turnout is perfect for her exercise requirements

The Last Days:

The average pregnancy is 338-343 days (about 11 months). However, normal gestation can range from 320-380 days. So

don't be overly concerned if the mare is past due. Prolonged gestation is not generally associated with problems or extra large foals unless the mare is fed fescue (which often is endophyte-infected). If the mare goes over 340 days, or if you are concerned, have the mare checked by a vet to make sure everything is ok.

Vaccines:

- Pneumabort K should be given at months 5,7, and 9 months. This will help prevent the abortion strain of rhino.
- 30 days before her due date she will need a 4 way booster and a West Nile booster.
- Other vaccines may be indicated depending on the mare's exposure to other horses. Talk with your vet if you have any questions.

De-worming:

Most de-worming products are safe for pregnant mares. You should check for this on the label. You should continue to de-worm the mare with your normal schedule. The mare also needs to be de-wormed 30 days before foaling. This will eliminate the worms that are passed from the mare to the foal in the milk.

Signs that birth is near:

- Filling of the udder (2-4 weeks before)
- Waxing of the teats (4-6 days prior)
- Softening of the hind muscles
- Relaxation/lengthening of the vulva
- Changes in the mare's behavior

