

The New-born Foal

The initial first few hours are when the mare and foal need to form a strong bond. Mares have a very strong instinct to look after their foals, therefore the foal-dam bond should not be interfered with.

What you can do to check that your new-born foal is healthy?

It is best to observe its behaviour and overall appearance closely. After your initial observations up close it is best to watch the foal undisturbed, preferably from outside the box. Once the foal has stood it should be nursing 5-7 times each hour. In between these times it should be exploring its surroundings, bonding with the mare and sleeping. Most foals should startle when you enter the box and run to hide behind their mother.

What to do in the first few hours of life

- Clean the navel to prevent infection entering the foal. It will need to be dipped in an antiseptic solution. This helps to dry the navel stump and prevent bacteria from tracking up into the body. This can be collected from the practice.
- Are there any signs of prematurity? For example a short silky coat, floppy ears, domed forehead, slack tendons and a small size.
- Is the foal shivering from the cold? Weak or premature foals are particularly susceptible to feeling the cold as they have poor body insulation and energy reserves. They are not always able to regulate their body temperature.
- Check that the foal is sucking correctly. Milk on the foal's head may mean the foal is not nursing correctly, or the mare is producing more milk than the foal can ingest. Milk seen coming down the nostrils may mean problems like a cleft palate.
- Have a close look at its legs. Are they straight and able to support the foal when it stands? Are they lax, windswept or contracted? If so, is the foal having difficulty staying up to nurse?
- Does its chest expand normally, with both sides symmetrical with each breath?
- Has it passed its first dung – the meconium? This is the dark hard balls of faeces that are an accumulation (while in the womb) of allantoic fluid, gut secretions and cellular debris. Failure to pass this can result in colic. After passing the meconium, pale coloured pasty milk faeces should now be passed. Colts are most at risk of meconium colic and will often require an enema.



Foals are born with a naïve immune system that does not have antibodies to fight off infections. The mare's first milk or colostrum is vital for the foal's health over the next 3 months because it contains the vital antibodies that will be absorbed across the foal's gut to protect it. After 8-12 hours the cells lining the foal's intestines close down and stop absorbing antibodies. Therefore it is essential that the foal sucks from the mare and receives the colostrum as early as possible within this time.

Observe the mare's udder prior to foaling. If she runs milk before the foal is born, it may be that she is losing her colostrum. In this case it would be advisable to collect and freeze it until the foal is born. Foals that fail to suck may need to have a stomach tube passed by the veterinary surgeon and given the stored colostrum. This should be done within the first 4 hours.

All foals should have their immunity levels tested at 24 hours to ensure they have received adequate levels of colostrum. In the event of not receiving enough colostrum, plasma should be administered to the foal as a drip straight into the blood stream.

Belsay Horse Trials

Well done to Laura De Weslow and the whole team of officials and volunteers that put a high amount of effort into putting on a great weekend of sport and entertainment. Vets Lesley and Euan were on duty for the horse trails and enjoyed watching inter hunt relay on Sunday afternoon provided a highly amusing end to the weekend. Well done to the winning Morpeth Hunt team who featured our own Ewan Macaulay as a team member. We are already looking forward to Belsay 2020 which will feature the National pony eventing championships.



Tour D'Alnorthumbria

A team of staff including vets, nurses, receptionists and support staff from Alnorthumbria Vets are aiming to raise as much money as possible for 2 fantastic charities by cycling over 180km around all 8 branches over the August bank holiday weekend. To some this may not sound like a huge challenge over 3 days however the majority of the team have absolutely no cycling experience at all and 4 of the team have had to buy a bike specifically for this challenge (a huge thanks to Adam at The Bike Shop - Alnwick for all the support so far)! With only 3 months to train and not very much spare time it will be no easy feat.

We are fundraising for the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution who provides help and support to those within the agricultural sector who fall on hard times. We are also raising money for StreetVet who provides free veterinary care to the companions of homeless people across the UK.

Have you checked for Ragwort and buttercups?

As we approach summer it is important to be extremely vigilant when checking your pastures for ragwort and buttercups. Ragwort is poisonous to horses and should be removed immediately (always wear gloves) if present. Ragwort damages the liver and can lead to irreversible damage, if not recognised early. Buttercups can also cause ulceration around the mouth and lips of horses and ponies and should also be managed if found.



June Reminders:

- **Zone Visits** - please be aware that it is payment at the time for treatment on all zone visits. You can either pay by cash or credit card over the phone. Please remember to ring the day before between 3.00pm and 5.00pm for your time or if your visit is a Monday please ring the Friday prior.
- If you have an overweight horse or pony now is a good time to start making plans to manage their weight during the summer. Grazing muzzles and small paddocks can be very useful in managing horses weight. You can also call the clinic to organise a yard weigh clinic on 01670 897 597.
- In order to comply with British eventing regulations, flu vaccines should be administered within 6 months of competing. This differs from FEI who ask for within 6 months and 21 days and not within 7 days of competing.
- Worm egg counts should be done every three months throughout the summer. These can be dropped off at any of our practices and one of the equine vets will give you a call with the re-

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