



Ask the VMD

Leon Riegel

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Too old to breed?

A reader asks:
What is the maximum age for first breeding of various farm animals — horses, ponies, goats, etc.? If a pony is first bred at 14 years, could she be expected to have a normal delivery and offspring?

Dr. Sheaffer comments:
Bear in mind that within each species of farm animals there is a fairly wide range of aging. For example, one pony at 14 may be experiencing various degenerative geriatric diseases while another 14 year old pony may be in perfect health and in her prime.

The general health of an animal is more critical than its reproductive ability. But both of these criteria are inseparably linked to one another. If a 14 year old pony is in good physical health, she may also be in good reproductive health.

In general, I would say that 14

years is too old to begin breeding any member of the equine species. However, there certainly may be exceptions to this rule.

Have your veterinarian perform a thorough physical exam and a reproductive exam before you breed the pony the first time. A complete blood count, internal palpation, a cervical or uterine culture and a visual speculum exam of the cervix and vagina will help you determine if she is a good candidate for breeding.

In general, a mare should be first bred before age 12. A doe, ewe or heifer should be bred by 3 years of age.

Conception in the older female farm animal is usually a greater problem than is gestation or delivery. If a healthy 14 year old pony conceives, she is likely to deliver a live, normal foal.

Temperature change

A reader asks:

What would make a horse's

temperature drop to 96 degrees Fahrenheit? Recently one of our geldings went off feed and when I took his temperature the thermometer read 96 degrees.

Can a thermometer freeze? I keep it out in the barn.

Dr. Sheaffer comments:

A temperature of 96 degrees Fahrenheit in a horse is considered a mild hypothermia. The normal body temperature ranges between 99-101 degrees Fahrenheit. Causes of such abnormal temperature include the following: chilling from the environment, ingestion of certain poisons and toxins; viral diseases (occasionally); treatment with antipyretic drugs like

aspirin and dipyrone; bacterial infection which releases a toxin into the system; and hypoglycemia or hypocalcemia.

A thermometer is a sealed hollow glass chamber containing mercury. Temperature extremes in a barn can cause the mercury to expand and contract beyond the

strength of the glass. This causes the glass to crack into the mercury chamber, breaking the seal.

These cracks are difficult to detect with the naked eye. In most cases, a cracked thermometer will give you an incorrect temperature reading.

Names new supervisor

NEW COLUMBIA — Russel J. Berna, Director of Marketing for American Breeders Service, has announced the appointment of William C. Flick as Representative Supervisor in Pennsylvania.

Flick is a native of Buffalo, New York and graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree from Cornell University in 1975. He later received his Masters Degree in Wildlife Management.

Immediately prior to joining ABS, Flick was employed by The Phoenix Companies, Buffalo, New York, in Insurance and Investment Sales.

Flick and his wife, Kathleen, have two young daughters. They reside in New Columbia, Pennsylvania.

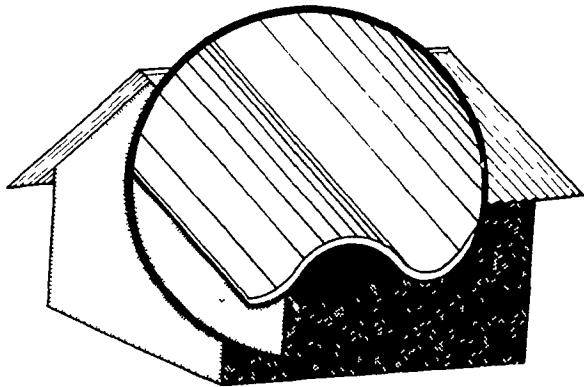


William C. Flick



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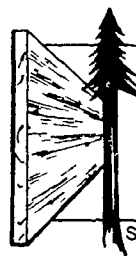
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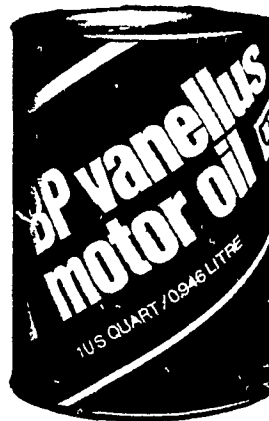
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