



## DelVal Bits

**THE FOALING MARE**  
**Fredrick R. Hofsaess Ph.D.**  
 Professor of Animal Science  
 Spring is coming, and for many mares, so are their foals.

While the normal gestational length of the mare is 340 days, considerable variation in pregnancy length exists and a variation from 320 to 360 days is certainly possible.

Therefore, the expectant mare should be watched during the last month of pregnancy to avoid "unexpected" arrivals.

Mares may exhibit a variety of signs as foaling approaches; with some mares, especially maidens, showing few signs of approaching parturition.

Signs may include softening and flaccid musculature around the tailhead, relaxation and edema of the vulva, some filling of the udder, and "dropping" of the abdomen.

"Waxing" of the teats may occur a few days to a few hours before foaling. Some mares may leak colostrum for hours or days before foaling.

Mares may be sampled for the calcium ion concentration in the udder, as it is known that the calcium level of the "colostrum" rises 72 to 24 hours before foaling.

As the mare approaches foal-

ing, most will show some degree of discomfort exhibited by walking in circles, looking at their flanks, mild sweating, and rubbing/switching their tail.

Many may defecate and urinate frequently and some will eat a considerable amount of straw while leaving available hay untouched. During this time, the foaling is being positioned and the placental membranes are dilating the cervix.

Stage II or "active" labor may last from a few minutes to 20 minutes and includes uterine and abdominal contractions to rupture the first water bag and expulsion of the foal.

It is important to leave the mare alone during this time as long as progress is being made with each series of contractions. Commonly there will be four to eight strong contractions followed by a "rest" period of several minutes.

Normally the feet will be presented first (soles down) followed by the nose/head. If the mare remains in

labor for more than 15-20 minutes with no progress being made, a malposition may exist and the mare should be gotten up and walked while competent assistance is obtained.

Malposition may exist if only one foot is present, if the head does not follow the two feet, more than two feet are presented, feet are upside down, or the nose appears without the front feet.

As the foal emerges, the inner sac or amnion usually breaks. If the amnion does not break, free the nose/head from the membrane so the foal is able to breathe.

Allow the mare and foal to lie quietly and undisturbed. The foal will usually begin to move about in 10-20 minutes and break the umbilical cord.

Most foals will be in dorsal recumbancy (sitting on their chest) within 30 minutes. The naval stump should be dipped in a container of tincture of iodine.

Be careful to avoid contacting the skin with iodine as it may scald the hide of a newborn foal. Redip the cord again at least twice in the next 24 hours. Most foals will develop a nurse reflex within 30-45 minutes after birth.

The last stage of labor is the expulsion of the afterbirth or placental membranes. This should take only a few hours and the retention of the placental

## Addison Co-op Recognizes Quality Producers

FREEMAN, N.Y. — Addison Milk Producers Cooperative conducted their annual meeting recently in Freeman, N.Y. Patronage checks had been mailed in December to co-op members.

Robert Button, treasurer, reported that the co-op is in sound financial position.

President Robert Nichols reported on the activities of the co-op this past year. The co-op is concerned about the attrition of dairy farmers as the result of current market conditions. Nichols reminded members that Addison Co-op could use additional quality producers for their market. He also noted that United Ag Services pays a sign up bonus for any member that signs up a new member.

James Patsos, CEO of United Ag Services, discussed the milk situation and consolidation going on in the industry. He predicted that milk prices will improve in

2003. With the increased milk price, co-op premiums, and MILC payments the average price for 2003 should be about \$14 per hundredweight, according to Patsos.

Patsos presented awards to the top quality producers in Addison Co-op this past year. Top Quality Producers are:

•Walk-Moor Farms, Cohocton, N.Y.

•Double D Dairy, Cameron Mills, N.Y.

•Ervin Miller, Jr., Woodhull, N.Y.

•James and Patricia Welch, Troupsburg, N.Y.

•Kim Shaklee and Janice Brown, Canaseraga, N.Y.

•Don and Kathy Bossard, Canaseraga, N.Y.

If anyone has an interest in improving this milk market, contact Bob Nichols, Addison, N.Y. (607) 359-2199.

membranes beyond four hours post foaling is considered "retained" and a veterinarian should be contacted.

Many mares object to the membranes contacting their hocks and it is advisable to tie the

placenta up with baling twine. Do not cut the placenta off at the vulva as the weight assists in expulsion of the membranes. Conversely, do not pull on these membranes as damage to the uterus may occur.

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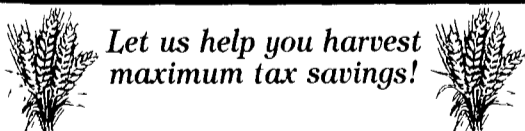
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