

Foaling & assessment of newborn foal

Proper preparation for foaling reduces stress for you, your mare, and the newborn foal. Although most births are uncomplicated, issues may arise that require prompt veterinary attention to ensure both mare and foal remain healthy. Consult your veterinary surgeon for tailored advice before foaling.

Hygiene and Environment

Prepare a large well-ventilated, draught-free foaling stable with clean straw bedding. Provide fresh water and quality hay, avoiding hay nets for safety. CCTV can help monitor the mare undisturbed. Foals often arrive at night when activity is low.

Signs of Approaching Birth

About 24 hours before foaling, mares can secrete a waxy substance from their teats ("waxing up"), though maiden mares might not.

Main stages of labour

- Stage One:** The uterus contracts to position the foal correctly; mares may be restless or show mild colic signs. Do not disturb her, foaling usually follows within hours.
- Stage Two:** The foal is born after the waters break and strong contractions begin. Delivery should occur within 15–20 minutes, with two front legs and muzzle first.
- Stage Three:** The placenta is expelled within three hours.

****Veterinary Assistance****

**If labour deviates from expected timings, call your vet immediately.
Intervene only under veterinary guidance.**



Foaling Difficulties

- Dystocia:** Difficult birth is rare but requires immediate veterinary attention if the foal's position impedes delivery. Manipulation or caesarean section may be necessary.
- Caesarean Section:** Only performed as a last resort at a referral hospital under general anesthesia.
- Retained Placenta:** If not expelled within three hours, contact your vet due to risk of serious complications.



Newborn Care

After birth, foals should sit up in 5 minutes, have a suck reflex in 10, stand within an hour, and nurse within two. Delays suggest possible health issues - contact your vet promptly. Always have both mare and foal examined within 24 hours.

Health Checks

- *Is the foal alert?
- *Signs of prematurity?
- *Gum color (should be pink and moist)?
- *Cold-shivering?
- *Nursing properly?
- *Leg straightness and ability to stand?
- *Symmetrical chest movement and absence of rib fractures?
- *Passed meconium?
- *Any abnormalities require prompt veterinary evaluation

Immune System

Foals receive crucial antibodies through colostrum within 12 hours. Monitor mares for pre-birth milk secretion and store colostrum if needed. Perform an IgG test 18-24 hours post-birth to assess immunity.

If you have any concerns, before, during or after the birth, please be sure to contact your veterinary surgeon who will be able to provide guidance and advice.