



PLANNING FOR A FOALING MARE

KNOW YOUR MARE'S DUE DATE

Knowing your mare's approximate due date will help you gauge when to start checking her regularly for signs of impending foaling.

To determine the due date, you need two things: Your mare's last breeding date & a due date formula. If you're not sure of the mare's last breeding date, contact the person in charge of breeding your mare, whether she was bred at a stud farm or by your veterinarian.

Both breeding farms and veterinary clinics keep records of the breeding dates of each mare bred at their facilities.

The normal length of a mare's pregnancy runs between 330 and 350 days, with the average being 340 days. A "rule of thumb" formula is to add 11 months & 11 days to your last breeding date to get an approximate foaling date.

You will need to start monitoring your mare, at least once daily, once she is at 4 weeks to foaling.

FOAL WATCH:

Although approximately 90% of mares will deliver their foals without difficulty or need for assistance, it is vitally important that someone is there to observe them, should assistance be required.

If your mare is a maiden mare, then she is at a greater risk of getting into difficulty during foaling. When your mare gets within days of foaling, it's not always feasible for you to babysit her 24 hours a day. Most of the time, when foaling seems imminent, regular checks two or three times an hour can help you catch the big event.

However, most of us need to work and sleep, so sometimes we simply can't check up on the mare that frequently. Instead, consider these alternatives for foaling down your mare.

1. Continuously check the mare yourself. As the mare nears her due date, take extra time to watch her during feedings. Get an idea of her daily routine, and you'll be able to recognize when she's exhibiting the signs of an impending foaling. If your mare shows some of the signs, try to check on her several times during the day. If it looks like the delivery is close, check her at least every 15 to 20 minutes – or stay with her – after dark.

2. Attach a foaling alarm to the mare. Foaling alarms are triggered when the mare lies down. They either trigger an alarm in your house, or some of the newer ones can send a text or call you when the alarm is activated. These alarms are available to purchase or some can be hired for the breeding season.

3. Send her to a breeding or foaling farm. Even if you're not planning to breed your mare to a stallion standing at a local farm, breeding farms often take in mares simply to foal them out. They've got the facilities, staff and experience to handle the process professionally.

4. Set up a camera and monitor system. Camera systems are becoming more affordable with every new technological breakthrough. These systems work well if you've got access to electricity near the foaling paddock – and if you've got someone to watch, or check, the monitor in the house.

Information in this brochure is of a general nature only and is not intended to replace the advice of your veterinarian. It is not intended as a foaling guide.



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THE MARE'S Paddock AND COMPANIONS:

Your mare should be settled in the location where she will give birth at least four weeks before her due date, to eliminate the stress caused by transportation during late-stage pregnancy.

As horses are social animals, it is ideal for the last month of gestation to have your mare paddocked with the same horses that she will be with after foaling.

This allows all social hierarchy to be established prior to a vulnerable foal being in the mix.

The best paddock companions are mares rather than geldings and young stock rather than foals.

When your mare starts showing signs of foaling, then she can be moved to your foaling paddock (ideally next door to the main paddock), to foal down and bond with her foal, before being placed back into the herd.

Prepare your foaling paddock:

A good foaling paddock needs to be clean and free from obstacles. A grass paddock is ideal for your mare to foal in. There should be no objects for the foal to run into or dams, as newborn foals have been reported to have drowned.

Ideally the foaling paddock will have been spelled for a minimum of several weeks to reduce worm contamination and to allow a good clean grass cover. The fencing of this paddock or yard should have a mesh, like chicken wire, around it as young, uncoordinated foals easily 'slip' through plain wire or post and rail fencing.

The foaling paddock should have easy vehicle access. Should complications arise during foaling, your veterinarian may need to get their car in the paddock, or potentially, you may need to get a car and float in or near the paddock, should the mare require hospitalisation.

Mare's Health:

It is very important that the mare receives her tetanus booster approximately 4 weeks prior to foaling.

It is a good idea to give the mare a wormer around this time as well.

Check to see if your mare has a caslick. This needs to be opened by a veterinarian, approximately two weeks prior to the mare foaling (or before this time, if the mare is showing any signs of impending parturition).

A caslick is a procedure performed by a veterinarian that involves suturing closed the upper part of the vulva. If you are unsure if your mare has been caslicked,, it is a very good idea to have a veterinarian check her for you, as it can be disastrous for a foaling mare, if she foals with an intact caslick, due to the foal tearing through the smaller opening.

Prepare your foaling kit:

A foaling kit is not a first aid kit. It is a kit designed to give you everything you need, not only during an foaling emergency, but it also contains all of the things you will need to deal with many of the normal matters you expect to face during and immediately after a foal's birth.

There are ready made foaling kits available for purchase and a list of the bare essentials of these kits will be in a following article.

Speak to your Veterinarian:

It is a good idea to touch base with your local veterinarian to let them know that you have a mare/s foaling down at your place. Let them know your foaling plan and also the approximate foaling date of your mare/s.

Discuss making a plan with them, in the unlikely situation that your mare or foal requires veterinary assistance during foaling. They will also be able to give you valuable information about planning for the upcoming foaling & foal.

Access to a vehicle and horse float/ truck:

Be sure you have access to a horse float or truck, to get your mare and foal to a veterinary hospital, should complications arise. This vehicle should be within an easy distance to the foaling paddock, be fuelled up and ready to go, as time is a critical factor when dealing with foaling emergencies.

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