



Care of the new born foal

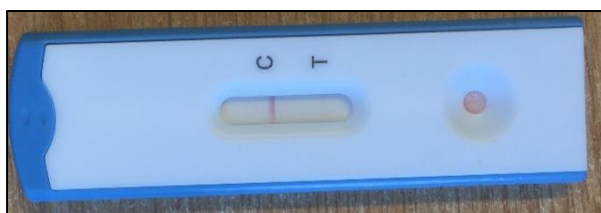
It can be a very nerve-wracking time waiting for the arrival of a foal. If you are unsure of what to expect of your new born foal over its first 24 hours of life, then our check list below will help you to identify any problems early.

- **Getting to their feet** – Most foals should get to their feet within the first hour of being born. They may be unsteady on their feet but should be able to walk around the stable and suckle once they are stood. Helping the foal to its feet and guiding it towards the mare's udder can help it get to grips with this. If your foal is lethargic or can't stand within this time, then call your vet. It is also worth noting any abnormalities of the limbs such as contracted joints or lax tendons as these can affect the foal's ability to stand.
- **Suckling and colostrum (mares first milk)** - It's important that the foal suckles the mare to drink colostrum within the first 6 hours of life. Foals born with very few antibodies, so they obtain most of these from the mare via the first milk. These antibodies are absorbed through their gut during these first 6 hours as it is more permeable for this time. However, after this time this ability to absorb these reduces over the next 12 hours. If your foal doesn't suckle within this time, then call the

Bexfields Farm
Galleywood road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 8BY
01245 346904

admin@claredonequine.co.uk

vet – we can perform a quick test in the stable from the foal's blood to check whether they have absorbed enough antibodies (an IgG quick test – which is shown below).



This test strip is performed with a drop of the foal's blood and shows us their antibody levels. A line in the C area confirms adequate antibodies. A line in the T area shows a lack of antibodies (IgG).

It's worth having some frozen colostrum or powdered colostrum on standby to bottle feed or supplement foals that haven't had enough within this time frame. If your foal's antibody level is too low after 12 hours has passed, then it is usually necessary to perform a plasma transfusion from the mare/donor horse/frozen plasma from your vet. Always make sure that they can latch on properly to the mare's udder and they can make a seal to suckle well. Foals with a cleft palate will have trouble doing this and milk can often be seen exiting the nostrils – call your vet if you observe this immediately.

- **Passing the first faeces (meconium)** – Once the foal has started suckling well this will stimulate the gut and they should pass their first faeces within the first two hours of life. Your foal may be having trouble passing this if you see them straining a lot, tail flagging, stretching out as though they are going to urinate or showing signs of colic (rolling etc.). If you notice any of these signs, then it is best to call you vet straight away. A meconium impaction can be treated in most cases at your yard. However, some of the above signs can be due to more serious causes of

Bexfields Farm
Galleywood road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 8BY
01245 346904

admin@claredonequine.co.uk

colic such as hernias (with entrapped intestine) or bladder rupture so it is always important to get your foal seen if you see any of those signs.

- **Urinating** – most foals will be observed to urinate normally within the first 3 hours of being born. The urine should appear straw coloured and a good stream should be observed. Should your foal show difficulty passing urine (stretching out, tail flagging, straining, colic) then please call your vet immediately.
- **Taking your foal's temperature** – Knowing how to take your foal's temperature will help detect any early signs of infectious/inflammatory conditions early and can provide vital information to your vet. A foal's temperature should generally be between 37 – 38.5°C. To take your foal's temperature place a regular thermometer into the rectum – make sure it is pressed to the side of the rectum in order to get an accurate reading (if it is sitting in faeces then a lower reading may appear). If your foal's temperature is greater than 38.5°C, then please call your vet as this could be a sign of acute infection such as sepsis or joint ill and is an emergency.
- **Foal heat diarrhoea** – It is common for all foals to have a bout of mild diarrhoea which coincides with the mare's first oestrus cycle at around 12-16 days post foaling. This diarrhoea is usually very mild (paste consistency but not watery) and transient lasting for 3-7 days maximum. Foals are usually very bright and alert, continue to suckle and otherwise seem very well. If the diarrhoea is associated with a raised temperature above 38.5 °C, they are lethargic, not suckling or it is very watery then please contact your vet as soon as possible.

Bexfields Farm
Galleywood road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 8BY
01245 346904

admin@claredonequine.co.uk



Bexfields Farm
Galleywood road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 8BY
01245 346904

admin@clarendonequine.co.uk