

As your mare's due date fast approaches, it is important to prepare for the big day and familiarise yourself with the foaling process.

Foaling Kit

It is useful to prepare a foaling kit several weeks in advance, it should include the following items:

- A watch or timer
- A list of emergency contacts including the vets and transporters
- Head torch or other light source
- Tail bandage
- Head collar and lead rope
- Clean towels and buckets
- Gloves
- String or twine
- Anti-bacterial hand washing solution
- Disinfectant (ideally iodine) to dip the foal's navel
- Access to warm water

1st stage labour

The mare displays signs of abdominal discomfort as she begins to experience uterine contractions and the foal starts repositioning into the birth canal for delivery. Signs include:

- Restlessness
- Sweating
- Pawing the ground
- Lying down and getting up and rolling
- "Running" milk – colostrum may be seen streaming from the teats

It is important not to disturb the mare during this time as this can delay delivery of the foal. This stage can appear as if the mare has colic, however generally in the period between contractions the mare is calm and settled. This stage can vary from 30 minutes to 4 hours!

The end of stage 1 is marked by the rupture of the allantochorion or the mare's "waters breaking".

2nd stage labour

This is usually a very rapid and explosive event once the mare begins actively straining. In a normal foaling, you should be able to visualise a white, fluid-filled sac (the amniotic sac) protruding from the vulval lips and the foal should present in a "diving position",

i.e. two front feet, often one ahead of the other with the soles facing down, followed by the foal's nose, head, shoulders and then hindquarters.

It is important to note that the foal should be delivered in 30 minutes or less. Mares will usually have 3-4 contractions, followed by a period of rest. However, if there is no progression within 10-15 minutes of the waters breaking, it is vital that you call your vet immediately.

This stage ends when the foal has been delivered. At this time, gently remove any membranes that may be obstructing the foal's nostrils and allow the mare and foal to bond undisturbed.

3rd stage labour

Following delivery of the foal, the placenta should be passed in its entirety within 1-3 hours of birth.

You will notice the placenta hanging from the mare initially as it is still attached to the uterus. Take care to tie it in a knot or up with string to prevent the mare standing on it and causing it to break

Be sure to keep the placenta in a bucket for your vet to examine.

When to call the vet

- 'Red bag delivery' – a red, velvet-like structure protruding from the vulva caused by premature separation of the allantochorion.
- Malpresentation – if the foal does not present in the usual "diving position" or there are no signs of the foal following rupture of the allantochorion.
- If stage 2 does not show signs of progressing within 10-15 minutes

Foaling Checklist Factsheet

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- If the foal hasn't nursed within 2 hours of birth
- Meconium not passed within 12 hours of birth
- Foetal membranes not passed within 3 hours of foal delivery

****Remember the "1-2-3 rule" – the foal should be standing within 1 hour, suckling within 2 hours and the placenta should be expelled within 3 hours****

Post-Foaling Mare and Foal Check

It is strongly recommended that a "post-foaling check" is performed as soon as possible following foaling. The vet will examine the mare and foal to ensure both are fit and healthy, as well as examine the placenta to ensure it is removed in its entirety, and measure the foal's antibody (IgG levels) to ensure adequate colostrum has been consumed. If you have any questions, our vets are more than happy to answer.

If you have any questions regarding foaling, please do not hesitate to contact the clinic to chat to one of our vets.



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