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## Foaling 101

In general, most mares will progress through the following steps before foaling:

- Udder filling within 2 to 4 weeks
- Engorged teats within 4 to 6 days
- Relaxed vulva and surrounding area within a few days
- Waxing of end of teats within 12 to 36 hours
- Restlessness, flank watching, tail swishing/raising and frequently urinating within hours to a day or two
- Stage 1 of Labor: Sweating, pacing, getting up and down, kicking at belly within a couple hours

When you start to notice these signs, provide a clean, safe, quiet place to foal. This can be a clean/dry and non-crowded paddock or a large stall with fresh straw bedding. Some of these signs mimic colic. She should continue to eat, drink, urinate, and defecate. Most births will occur between 8pm and 6am.

### WHEN TO CALL:



- Dripping/streaming milk before foaling
- New vaginal discharge
- Restlessness and signs of colic without eating, drinking, urinating, and defecating.
- Stage 1 of labor lasting more than a couple hours

Once the water breaks, the foal is normally born very quickly (<20-30 minutes). After an hour, the chance of losing the foal or having serious complications (dummy foal syndrome) is very high. Once on the ground, the foal should be moving and sitting upright in 5 to 10 minutes. If you are present, dry the foal off with towels and rub the chest and back to stimulate movement and breathing.

### Remember the 1, 2, 3 rule:

1. Foal should be standing within 1 hour
2. Foal should be nursing within 2 hours
3. Mare should completely pass her placenta AND  
Foal should start to pass meconium (the first feces - these are dark, sticky, hard pellets) within 3 hours.

Do not allow the mare to eat the placenta. This can cause choke. Save the placenta in a trash bag or covered bucket for us to evaluate later in the day. If there are any missing pieces, this can make the mare sick very quickly.

Dip the umbilicus (navel) with dilute chlorhexidine (1 part of 2% chlorhex to 3 to 4 parts of water) 3 to 4 times in the first 24 hours starting within an hour of birth. Do not use un-diluted iodine.

**WHEN TO CALL:**



- Foal is not born within 30 minutes of the water breaking
- Mare is passing a solid red velvety bag instead of the normal translucent white bag
- Mare appears to be significantly struggling and requires assistance. Do not try to pull the foal without calling us.
- Foal is not coming out with 2 front feet first followed by the nose/head. The foal should be positioned upright with the head above the legs.
- Foal is not responsive/moving or breathing reliably within several minutes of being born
- Excessive/continued bleeding from the foal's umbilicus after it breaks
- Foal is not standing within 2 hours
- Foal is not reliably nursing within 4 hours, milk is coming out of the foal's nose, mare won't allow the foal to nurse, or mare has not produced much milk. Do not attempt to bottle feed.
- Foal has not started to pass meconium with 6 hours or has not passed all of the meconium and transitioned to milk feces (tooth-paste consistency) within 12 hours
- Foal is straining to defecate/tail-flagging with no feces passed
- Mare's placenta is not passed within 6 hours or the placenta is not passed in one piece
- Mare shows signs of colic after the first 30-60 minutes post-foaling
- A tear in the vulva/vagina is seen or significant amounts of fresh blood are dripping/streaming. Blood-tinged discharge is normal for the first week.

**Next Steps:**

- Call when the office opens at 9 am (or right away if it's during business hours) to check in with a doctor and arrange for a new foal and mare exam later that day. If it is the weekend, call the emergency line after 9 am to speak with the doctor on call.
- An IgG test should be performed at approximately 15 hours old to see if the foal nursed and absorbed enough quality colostrum to establish their immune system.
- Do not touch the foal's umbilicus or mouth with bare/unwashed hands. Use clean gloves if you need to touch these.
- Remove feces promptly for the first day or so to reduce risk of bacterial infections. Provide clean, dry, straw bedding or clean, dry pasture. Bring them inside if it is windy, wet, or cold.
- If you need to pick up the foal, never lift from under the belly. Put one arm in front of the chest and the other arm under the rump.