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Care of your Mare through Pregnancy

Feeding

For mares which maintain condition well (especially native ponies), you may not need to change the diet much at all until the very end of pregnancy. We advise condition scoring and weighing (using a weigh tape) about once a month in the last 5 months of pregnancy. We have condition score cards and weight tapes in our shop at Martholme if you need them. If your mare is maintaining condition well on a normal high fibre diet, the only additional requirement is vitamins and minerals. These can be obtained adding a supplement such as Top Spec Number 3 to the mare's bucket feed. In the last month of pregnancy, you may gradually introduce a higher energy stud mix or cubes to the fibre diet. This should not be done if the mare is already overweight.

Mares which are not such "good doers" are likely to require increased concentrates from 3-5 months prior to foaling. The type and amount required will depend on the mare's weight, condition score and breed / type so we recommend you contact a nutritional helpline (such as Dodson & Horrell's helpline on 08704 423322) or speak to us for more specific dietary advice.

Protection Against Abortion

Herpes virus is the most common cause of infectious abortion in the UK. It is possible to protect your mare against Herpes by vaccination. The vaccine is given at 5, 7 and 9 months of pregnancy. It costs approximately £23 per vaccination and is particularly recommended for mares on larger yards where the risk of infection is greater. Please note that there are many other potential causes of abortion and the vaccine only provides protection against herpes virus.

Other Vaccinations

Influenza vaccinations can continue as normal during pregnancy. It is sensible to keep cover up to date as a bout of 'flu could result in abortion.

Strangles vaccination has not been fully tested in pregnant mares and is therefore not advised. If your mare is at risk of catching strangles, we would advise re-vaccinating when the foal is weaned. Foals can be vaccinated from 4 months old.

Tetanus Cover

We recommend a tetanus booster one month prior to foaling to provide the foal with tetanus protection via the colostrum. Foals are very prone to tetanus and any foals born to mares which have not received a tetanus booster need to be injected with tetanus anti-toxin soon after birth. This does not offer the same level of protection and is more expensive so vaccination of the mare prior to foaling is the sensible option. The pre-foaling tetanus booster is an ideal time for your mare to have a health check and for foaling procedures to be discussed.

Riding

In the wild, mares will gallop around with the herd right up to the day they give birth, so gentle ridden exercise is unlikely to harm mare or foal. We would advise that you avoid any exercise where your mare could fall or be injured, such as cross country. There is some risk to the foal if the mare has a nasty fall and injuries in the mare are harder to treat because many drugs cannot be used during pregnancy. In the last 3 months of pregnancy, it is sensible to limit ridden work to walk and gentle trot only and avoiding excessive sweating. Most mares are not ridden at all in the last month of pregnancy.

Foaling

We recommend foaling inside in most instances and your mare should be settled in her foaling box at least one month before her due date. Please refer to our separate fact sheet on foaling and problems of the new born foal.