

attempting to deliver a foal that is not in the proper position.

Once the front feet and nose appear, the fetus should be expelled within 20 minutes. Any variation of this also requires an immediate call to your vet. The entire foal is frequently delivered before the amniotic membrane ruptures, but is usually torn by the foal's head and front feet. If not, the membrane should be opened immediately to prevent suffocation.

Another thing to look for is what appears to be a big red mass, as the placenta is forced through the vulva. This is an indication of a detached placenta, which is also referred to as a red bag. If this happens, time is of the essence. Once the placenta detaches from the uterus, the foal is no longer getting oxygen. The foal must be delivered in a matter of minutes and chances are you will have to intervene. As the mare has contractions, gently pull the foal until it passes the hips. The foal should then be out of danger. However, your vet should be contacted in case of other complications.

The umbilical cord remains attached even after the entire foal has cleared the vulva. The mare will probably continue to lie down for a few minutes after delivery unless disturbed. If there are no complications, try to leave the mare and foal alone as much as possible. Rushing into the stall immediately following foaling may lead to premature rupture of the umbilicus and depriving the foal of blood.

The umbilical cord normally breaks approximately 2 inches from the foal's abdomen when the mare stands up. If it does not, break the cord by holding the cord with one hand against the foal's abdomen and pull with the other hand about 4 inches below the foal. Then treat the stump several times daily with tamed iodine.

AFTER BIRTH

During the third stage, the placenta is expelled. It is not unusual for the entire placenta to be passed within 10–15 minutes, and may occur while the mare is lying down. Retention of the placenta for more than three or four hours requires veterinary attention. A retained placenta is a major cause of laminitis and/or future fertility problems.

Generally, the foal should stand within an hour or hour and a half and nurse in three to four hours. At this point, it is extremely

important to leave the mare and foal alone to bond with each other. Too much human intervention too soon may increase the risk of rejection.

Now that the foal is born, and all is well between the mare and foal, it is important to watch for subtle things that could indicate a potential problem. There is a fine line between a foal being tough yet fragile, so familiarize yourself with normal behavior in foals. The first indication of a problem is if the foal does not nurse regularly. Foals nurse every 40 minutes to an hour. If the foal deviates from that routine or if the mare's udder appears very full (like the foal has not nursed recently) and may be even dripping milk, contact your vet immediately. Severe diarrhea is also something that should be addressed immediately.

As your foal gets older, be sure to discuss a vaccination and worming schedule with your vet.

Having a foal is an exciting time for everyone. Some people choose to foal their mare at home, but depending on the financial situation (cost of the stud fee, availability of the stallion the mare was bred to, and breeding costs), it may be wise to consider foaling your mare at a farm that specializes in foaling and is knowledgeable enough to recognize potential problems. ❧

LeAnne Dayton is co-owner of Wind N Wood Farm, Ltd., a state-of-the-art foaling facility and Thoroughbred breeding farm located at St. Michael, Minn. LeAnne and her husband, David, have a lifetime of experience raising and caring for horses. For more information, visit www.windnwoodfarm.com.



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