

HAYES EQUINE VETERINARY SERVICES

6544 FM 1753
Katie Hayes, DVM
www.hayesequinevet.com

DENISON, TX 75021

(903) 465-0777
Meghan McCarville, DVM
Find us on Facebook

June 2016 Newsletter

The Babies Have Arrived!

A summary of foaling season

Most people are familiar with the adage that mares and foals are better left alone to foal and rarely need help. It's pretty rare for mares to have a dystocia (where the baby gets stuck) is a true emergency that requires the assistance of a veterinarian. What is far more likely is the foal is born, but something happens between birth and the first few days that causes the foal to get sick or hurt. The following are the top five reasons we see sick foals in veterinary medicine.

1. **Septic at Birth:** Most people don't realize that mares that have an infection in their uterus can and will carry a foal to term, even though it's more common for them not to conceive or to abort. However, if the mare conceives a foal in an infected uterus, most likely the foal will be born infected. These foals are sickly at birth, sometimes never standing to nurse and require intensive care to save them. Other times they are born seemingly healthy, but decline quickly as time goes on.
2. **Failure of Passive Transfer:** In essence, the foal does not get enough colostrum. We all know the importance of the foal receiving colostrum from the mare because foals are not born with antibodies like human babies. They require the mare to provide them. Reasons the foal might not get colostrum are many including the mare may not have good quality colostrum, the foal was unable to nurse adequately, or the foal was born sick and all the antibodies it got from the mare were immediately used up.
3. **Stressed foals:** Foals that get stressed out have a much higher risk of getting sick. Foals born in the pasture, especially to maiden mares or mares foaling in a herd of horses, tend to get stressed very quickly as the environment is not conducive to a newborn. Mares that foal in the pasture or with other horses around feel the need to protect the foal and she spends more of her time chasing off the other horses than she does caring for her foal. As a result, the foal is chasing the mare around, causing the foal to get hurt or too hot.
4. **Dummy Foal Syndrome:** This one has gotten a lot of attention recently, where foals seem to be born asleep. These foals have a hard time standing and nursing, if they even stand and nurse at all, and oftentimes get sick due to failure of passive transfer or from the stress of the environment. The Madigan Foal Squeeze is a technique that has been developed to help these foals regain consciousness. The theory is that the foal did not get enough pressure to dissipate the neurohormones that keep them asleep in the uterus. By squeezing the foal, this helps to dissipate the hormone and "wake them up."
5. **Oral Infection/Navel Ill:** Another reason we see sick foals is because the foal picks up bacteria in the environment. Especially in those first few hours when the foal is trying to find the teat. It's very easy for a foal to pick up a bacterial infection from the environment, especially if the mare's legs and

teats are dirty, or the foaling area is dirty. The navel becomes infected when the newly born foal's navel comes into contact with a dirty stall.

No matter the cause of the sick foal, it's important to pay close attention to their behavior and call your veterinarian as soon as any odd behavior is noticed. Foals spiral down the drain **VERY** quickly, so it's important to seek medical help as soon as possible. In order to do this, mares should foal alone in a clean, safe environment where she and her foal can be monitored closely. To avoid a foal being born sick from an infected uterus, it's important to culture the mare before breeding begins. If she is being live covered, both she and the stallion should be washed before mating occurs to avoid any fecal contaminants being brought into the uterus.

Castration Signs: June 20th thru June 24th