

## CARING FOR YOUR PREGNANT MARE

The normal pregnancy period for a mare is about 340 days, give or take 30 days. An easy way to work out the due date is to take your mares' ovulation or last service date, subtract a month and then add 5-7 days. This will give you a good approximation.

Throughout the mares pregnancy it is important to ensure your mare is in good health with regular deworming, dental care and hoof care, vaccinations and on an increasing plane of nutrition.

### **Feeding your pregnant mare:**

Pregnancy places a high nutrient demand on your mare as she has to support development of the placenta, foetus and mammary gland in addition to her own basic requirements. It is imperative that she has an adequate amount of feed available to her for the duration of pregnancy, with particular attention paid to increased energy intake in the last trimester of pregnancy when the foal gains the most weight. We recommend feeding a high quality feed designed specifically for the pregnant mare to ensure adequate energy and protein along with balanced vitamins and minerals. Additionally, pasture access and good quality hay should be made available ad lib. Lucerne or legume grass hays have higher energy, protein and calcium levels than pasture/meadow hay. Vitamin and mineral supplements can also be included in the last trimester.

### **Dental care:**

We recommend a full dental examination and treatment prior to putting your mare in foal or in the early stages of gestation. Routine dental care is important throughout the life of your horse, it allows for early identification of any oral pathology or tooth problems and ensures they can chew properly with no discomfort and maximise nutrient access from feed.

### **Hoof care:**

It is important to continue looking after your mare's feet with regular trimming as pregnancy will increase weight loading on the feet, increase risk of laminitis and potentially reduce hoof wall quality due to nutrients being preferentially placed towards pregnancy. Regular hoof trims will ensure that any problems are identified early and allow management of any pre-existing issues.

### **Vaccinations:**

Routine vaccinations of all horses is an important part of their health. Foals are highly susceptible to tetanus so we strongly recommend pregnant mares receive their annual tetanus and strangles booster 4-6 weeks before their foaling date to ensure maximum antibodies are concentrated into the colostrum for the foal to absorb providing protection for the first few months of life.

Vaccinations can also be administered to reduce spread of infectious disease, for example, Equine Herpes Virus 1 and 4, which can affect weanlings, adult horses and cause abortion. Separation of weanlings, adult horses and pregnant mare populations is an important part of managing this disease in addition to vaccination. Please speak with your veterinarian to discuss other available vaccinations.

### **Deworming:**

Regular faecal egg counts are important to monitor your horse's worm burden and ensure efficacy of your dewormer treatments. Pregnancy results in immunosuppression and can predispose mares to harbouring higher worm burdens which will increase the drain on their energy intake. We recommend anthelmintic treatment with an ivermectin product approximately 4-5 weeks prior to foaling to reduce transfer of worms to your foal via the mare's milk.