

## EMBRYO TRANSFER

**Embryo transfer (ET)** is an exciting way of breeding your mare, without requiring her to carry a foal to term. ET involves inseminating your mare (the “donor”) with your chosen stallion’s semen, but the embryo is donated to a recipient (“surrogate”) mare, who will carry and give birth to the foal.

Advantages of ET:

- The donor mare can continue actively competing whilst producing foals
- Many sport horse mares compete to a high level until their teenage years, so by the time they are retired to stud, their fertility is already declining
- Multiple foals can be produced in one season, if desired
- No risks associated with pregnancy and foaling for your mare



One of the most challenging aspects of ET is the synchronisation of a recipient mare and the donor mare. This is most easily achieved by having a large herd of recipient mares and regularly scanning them to ensure that they will be at the right stage in their cycle to receive a donor embryo.

The donor mare is inseminated using fresh, chilled or frozen semen in the usual fashion. The recipient mare ideally must ovulate a day or so after the donor mare. This means the mare is physiologically and hormonally appropriate to receive the embryo. After 7 or 8 days, before anything can be detected with an ultrasound scan, the donor mare is “flushed” to retrieve the embryo. This is done per vaginum and involves lavaging the uterus with a special medium to flush the embryo into a filter. This procedure usually takes 30-45 minutes.

Once an embryo is recovered and cleaned, it is graded under a microscope. The embryo can be cooled and transported to the recipient herd within 24 hours. The embryo is carefully transferred to the recipient mare, who is started on medication to help sustain the pregnancy. The recipient mare is scanned 4-5 days later to check that the pregnancy has held.



After being confirmed in foal at 45 days, the recipient mare leaves the herd and is kept with the owner of the donor mare. The owner of the donor mare is responsible for the recipient mare whilst she is carrying the foal and until weaning. After the foal is weaned, the recipient is returned to the facility to re-join the recipient herd.

Anyone thinking about ET has to consider the financial and practical aspects of the decision but it can be a very useful method of breeding. At Elite Equine, we are happy to manage the artificial insemination of your mare and flush embryos to be sent to a facility with a recipient herd.

If you believe ET might be right for you and your mare, or would just like some more information, please contact us on 0412619740.