



The first 24 hours

in a foal's life

a checklist

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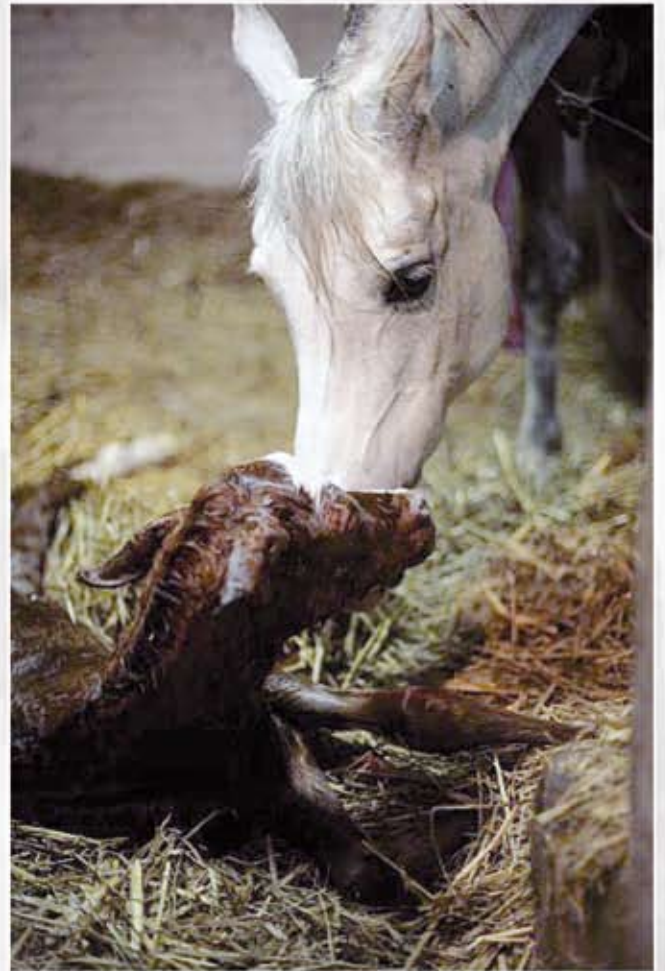
1 *What is the position of the foal at delivery? The foal should be delivered front feet first, with the head just above the knees. The foal should be in a "sitting" position in the mare with the hind feet tucked up underneath it. The front hooves should be pointing down (the sole of the foot faces the ground).*

2 *How long should it take for the foal to be born? Once the mare's water breaks, the foal should be out within 20 minutes. If you don't see anything after ten minutes of vigorous labor, you should alert your veterinarian.*

3 *Is the foal breathing? Once the foal's ribcage has cleared the mare's body, it will begin breathing. All membranes should be cleared away from the face of the foal. Once a foal is out of the mare, it should be breathing on its own. Tickling the inside of its nose with a piece of straw can encourage a sneeze and help it start breathing. If the foal is not breathing on its own, it may require oxygen and veterinary intervention.*

4 *How long before the foal stands up? Some foals may stand within 15 minutes of birth. Most foals take a little longer. They will make many attempts to stand before becoming successful in most cases. Normal foals should stand within the first hour.*

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5 *How long before the foal nurses? Most foals will attempt to nurse as soon as they can stand up. Be patient but be prepared. Foals can try nursing on many things—walls, buckets, mare's knees, etc. before finding the udder. A foal should nurse within two hours of birth. The sooner the foal nurses and gets some of the mare's colostrum (the "first" milk that is only produced in the first 24 hours), the more disease protection it will gain from the antibodies provided in the milk. Foals should nurse 4-6 times per hour in the first few days. Make sure you actually see the foal nurse and swallow the milk. Do not assume it is nursing if you see the head underneath the mare. If you see a lot of milk on the foal's face, either fresh or dried (milk face) it can be a sign that the foal is not nursing and the mare's udder is*

so full it is squirting the foal on the face when it attempts to nurse.

6 *When should it pass the meconium? (first feces). Most foals will pass some meconium after they nurse. Many farms will give newborn foals an enema to help the foal get rid of these feces. If the foal is standing with its back hunched up and/or is holding its tail in the air constantly, it may be having trouble passing the meconium. Any newborn foal that lies on its back with its legs in the air may be experiencing abdominal distress and you should contact your veterinarian. The foal should pass these feces, formed in utero within a few hours of birth.*

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7 How often should the foal sleep? Newborn foals do pretty much nothing but sleep and eat. So if its not nursing, it should be sleeping. A normal foal sleeps in a relaxed fashion, usually on its side with legs extended. It can also sleep on its chest, but should be relaxed and quiet, not rolling or tense when lying down.

8 Umbilical stump. The umbilical stump should be treated with a mild disinfectant such as Nolvasan® diluted 50% with water. Put in a spray bottle and spray several times a day for several days. Do not use iodine or tincture of iodine. It can cauterize the stump, trapping bacteria above the umbilicus and cause an abscess. If you see any fluid dripping from the umbilicus you should notify your veterinarian. The foal

may have a patent urachus, which is an incomplete sealing off of the fetal urinary tract.

9 IgG test. The foal should have a blood test at 12 hours of age to determine its IgG status. IgG are the immunoglobulins that is transferred from the mare to the foal from the colostrum to protect it from disease. These are large proteins that can only be absorbed by the foal's stomach for the first 24 hours of life. After that time, the foal's stomach lining changes and it can no longer absorb these proteins. If the foal has a low IgG level, it is at risk of having an immune system deficiency. IF the foal is tested at 12 hours and the level is low, it can be give oral plasma up to 24 hours of age. After 24 hours of age, if the IgG level is

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still low, the foal will likely need an intravenous plasma transfer, which is more complicated than giving it the oral plasma.

10 Make sure you see the foal urinate. Occasionally, a foal's bladder may rupture from the pressure of the birth process. It may take several days for this to become evident. Therefore make sure that you see the foal urinate. Males have a higher risk of bladder rupture than female foals. A colt should only urinate from the penis. If any urine is seen coming from the umbilicus (see patent urachus in #8) contact your veterinarian.

11 The mare should pass the placenta within three hours of foaling. If she has not passed the placenta by that time, contact your veterinarian. Remember the 1-2-3 rule.

The foal should stand within one hour; nurse within two hours and the mare should pass the placenta within three hours.