



Covered Bridge Equine, P.C.
1071 Jamestown Blvd. Suite #D1
Watkinsville, Georgia 30677

Newborn Foal Checklist

- A newborn foal should stand and nurse within **2 hours of birth**. Usually this happens sooner, but if it takes longer than 2 hours, call your veterinarian.
- Observe the foal from a distance (outside the stall) and make sure he/she is bright, alert, and responsive (bright eyes, ears pricked forward, interested in his surroundings).
- The foal should pass the meconium (a dark, tar-like feces) within 12 hours. If the meconium is not passed by this time, the foal will feel colicky and may need further treatment such as an enema, IV fluids or nasogastric tubing.
DO NOT attempt to give an enema to your foal without veterinary assistance. The tissue around the anus and rectum is very delicate and can easily be torn, resulting in serious complications. If necessary, your vet will give an enema at the initial newborn exam.
- The umbilicus should be dipped once as soon as possible in a dilute Chlorhexidine solution or dilute betadine solution. Do not use iodine as this may irritate the sensitive skin around the umbilical cord.
- The foal should be observed urinating normally within the first 12 hours. If the foal appears to be urinating out of the umbilicus (you will often see 2 streams of urine if this happens), or if he/she appears to be straining to urinate, please call your veterinarian.
- It is normal for the foal to nurse every 5-7 minutes during periods when he is awake and standing. Foals should nurse at least once an hour. If your foal is down and not nursing for more than 2 consecutive hours, assist them to stand and nurse and call your veterinarian.
- If at any point the foal looks depressed (not nursing, lethargic, diarrhea, acting colicky, laying on his/her back with legs pulled toward the abdomen, grinding his teeth, lameness, swollen joints, flagging his tail etc.), please call your veterinarian. Most foals are healthy from the very beginning. If a problem does occur, it is best to treat it early in order to have the best possible outcome for the foal.
- The foal should be well hydrated at all times. If the eyes appear sunken, the skin tents easily, or the gums are dry, fluid therapy may be required.



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Again, a foal that is actively nursing usually achieves adequate hydration. Because of this, foals should urinate frequently!! If your foal isn't passing urine every few hours he/she could be dehydrated.

- Make sure the foal is suckling the teats of the mare, some foals will attempt to nurse the mare's stifles or the stall walls and may need more direction. Make sure they are swallowing and milk is not coming out of their nose or on their face. They make very convincing suckling noises but may not actually be nursing successfully!

Well Foal Exam

It is recommended that **all newborn foals have a veterinary exam** when they are between **12-24 hours** of age to check for abnormalities such as:

- a cleft palate
- inappropriate suckle reflex
- failure of passive transfer (not receiving adequate colostrum from the mare)
- patent urachus (umbilicus that communicates outside the abdomen and drains urine)
- heart murmurs
- aspiration pneumonia
- fever
- hernia (umbilical or inguinal)
- angular limb deformities
- contracted tendons
- sepsis

On this initial visit, a blood sample will be drawn from the foal in order to run a test called Foal IgG. This test can be run at the farm and will help determine if the foal has successfully absorbed all of the important nutrients he needs from the mare's colostrum. If these antibody levels are low, the foal may need a plasma transfusion.



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Future Considerations:

- If everything is normal with the foal at the initial exam, he/she does not need to be vaccinated as a newborn (as long as the mare had her 30 day pre-foaling vaccines). The foal will need to be vaccinated at 4, 5, & 6 months of age. Starting at 2 months of age the foal may be dewormed with Strongid (pyrantel pamoate) or Panacur (fenbendazole) and then once a month for 3 treatments. At that time he/she should receive a dose of ivermectin (6 months old) and start a deworming schedule similar to an adult horse. It is important to dose foals by their weight! An overdose of dewormer can be dangerous for them!
- Around 7-14 days after birth, the foal may experience a mild to moderate bout of diarrhea called "foal heat" diarrhea. This correlates with the timing of the mare's first ovulation after delivery. The foal's perianal region should be cleaned with warm, soapy water and Desitin® (an over-the-counter diaper rash medication) should be applied to this area to prevent sores from forming. Generally, foal heat diarrhea is not treated unless it persists for more than a few days or if it is extremely watery. Please call us if you have any questions.
- It is recommended to geld stud colts between 6 months and 12 months of age. The longer you wait, the more involved the surgery becomes (more bleeding, more swelling and pain, and a longer recovery period). Stud colts must be vaccinated for tetanus prior to castration.