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Breeding your Mare

Breeding your own favorite mare to produce a gorgeous prancing new equine individual is a glorious dream when everything goes well. Many things can go wrong resulting in the mare not falling pregnant, abortion or loss of the foal or even death of the mare. Here are a few tips on things to consider and organize to increase your chances of success.

Facilities

- Extra space on your horse property to separate mare and foal from other horses.
- Broodmares and foals should be in isolation so that horses that leave and return to the farm for shows and events are kept separate to reduce infection spread.
- A dedicated foaling area such as an extra large stall, yard or small grassed paddock is kept and it should be warm 20° C – 35° C and clean.
- Have personnel available for monitoring the mares at term and newborn foals.
- Mare examination facilities such as a horse crush will allow safe and easy mare procedures.

The mare

- Any breeding history of difficulties are likely to recur unless preventative steps taken.
- A veterinary exam for general health and reproductive conformation to highlight any problems the mare may encounter.
- Temperament and conformational traits are genetically passed to offspring, ensure your mare and chosen stallion has qualities you want in your foal.

Care for your Mare during Pregnancy

- The developing foal relies on the health of its mother to develop.
- A balanced diet using high quality feedstuffs is required, aim for good condition without obesity.
- Regular worming program to keep the parasite load low – worms can affect both mare and foal.
- Tetanus vaccination is strongly recommended. Strangles and Equine Herpes vaccinations are dependent on the risk of these diseases in your area.

- Regular dental treatments and hoof care is required.
- Immediate attention to the mare if she becomes unwell is needed as many diseases will cause loss of the foal or can compromise its health.
- It is especially important to call vet if the mare develops a vaginal discharge at any stage of the pregnancy.

Breeding Procedures to increase Success

- Bacterial cultures of mare uterus samples to determine a healthy uterus, this is most useful in problem breeders.
- Determine the right time to mate with the stallion by using the mare's behaviour towards him or a teaser.
- Follicle Testing: success of conception is increased if the mare's ovaries are ultrasound scanned to see when an ovum; the mares' egg, is ready to be released and that the uterus is healthy.
- Pregnancy determination: from 16 days post mating, the ultrasound can show a tiny foetal vesicle, scans at this time are recommended for thoroughbreds as twin vesicles are common and one should be removed early, so that the other is successful. Other mares should be scanned between day 21 – 45 days.
- The frequency of scanning depends of the breeders' aims and should discuss this with their vet.
- Your mare's vet may recommend a 'Caslick's operation', it is a simple surgical technique to decrease contamination of the reproductive tract so keeping the foal healthy.
- Reproductive technology: intense scanning and hormone supplementation is necessary if you are using advanced techniques, e.g. Artificial insemination, embryo transfer and aids success of professional stud farms.

Summary

Careful planning, good facilities and attention to detailed horsemanship in consultation with your horse's vet will prepare your mare for the nurturing of the foal.