
BREEDING FROM YOUR MARE

If you are thinking of putting your mare in foal, Tyrrells Equine Clinic can offer you advise and guidance through the process, from the first steps of conception, to the post-natal period.

Things to consider before breeding from your mare

Breeding from your mare is not a cheap or quick way of getting a new horse. You have to consider carefully the responsibilities and the expenses of this decision. Breeding should be done responsibly, and you should consider if your mare is suitable for breeding. Broodmares should have desirable or valuable attributes, not only in terms their conformation or athletic ability but also their temperament and personality.



You will need good facilities for your mare before and during the pregnancy, a large safe stable for the mare to foal and a good and safe paddock to turn them out. When the time of foaling gets closer, your mare will need careful monitoring and personnel that can recognise and assist if a problem arises. You need to consider if you can do it at your premises or you want to keep your mare at a stud.

Breeding from your mare is not risk free. From injuries during natural cover and uterine/placenta infections during the pregnancy, to problems associated with foaling and a sick mare or foal. Prompt detection and attention to these problems is crucial to ensure a healthy and happy mare and foal at the end of the process.

Pre-breeding checks We recommend all mares to have a full health and gynaecological examination at the start of the breeding season. This should include rectal an ultrasound scan of the cervix, uterus and ovaries and testing for venereal diseases which will include a clitoral/uterine swab to test for Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) and may also include a blood sample to test for Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA) and Equine Infectious Anaemia (EIA). This is a good opportunity to discuss if you want your mare to be covered naturally or if you want artificial insemination (AI), and which stallion do you want to use.



Natural cover and Artificial insemination (AI)

Natural covering is the traditional option and can have good success rates if done well and in experienced hands. However, it can be risky to the mare, handlers and potentially cause fertility issues. Mares with certain breeding issues often have better fertility rates with AI. AI involves placing the semen directly in the uterus using a catheter. Semen can be either fresh, chilled or frozen.



- Fresh semen can only be used if the stallion is near and insemination can be performed shortly after collection.
- Chilled semen can survive for approximately 48 hours. This gives the advantage that you can use semen collected in other countries and shipped. We scan the mare to monitor the cycle and ensure we inseminate around the ovulation time.
- Frozen semen can be stored for long periods of time on special containers although the semen only survives between 6-12 hours once defrosted. This means that the mare must be inseminated as close as possible to ovulation, which requires more frequent monitoring of the cycle and multiple ultrasound scans. Not all stallions can produce semen that can be frozen.

Once inseminated, we examine and scan the mare to monitor the uterus and the ovaries postovulation. Some mares may need a uterine flush to help improve conception.

Pregnancy

After insemination further scans are carried out to monitor that the pregnancy is developing as expected.

- Pregnancy diagnosis scan on day 14-16 post-insemination. It is very important that the presence of twins is checked at this point. Twins is a common cause of foetal resorption and abortion, and if left to term twins are frequently associated with dystocia (foaling difficulties) and damage to the mare's reproductive tracts, and small foals are produced that usually have very poor survival rates.
- A 24-26 days scan will allow to see the foetal heartbeat. The presence of twins is reevaluated.
- 45 days scan to ensure that the pregnancy is developing as expected.
- At 60 days it is possible to identify the gender of the foal, assuming the foetus is in the right position!



For the health of mum and baby your mare should be kept up to date with worming and 'flu and tetanus vaccination. We advise to give a 'flu and tetanus booster in the last three months before foaling. This is to ensure a good antibody level in the colostrum which is important for your foals' immunity to disease.

Equine Herpes Virus (EHV) is a well-known cause of abortion in pregnant mares. To minimise this risk pregnant mares can be vaccinated at the 5th, 7th and 9th months of pregnancy. In large studs, Rotavirus infection can cause diarrhoea in foals. Vaccinating the mare at the 8th, 9th and 10th months of pregnancy can help to protect the foal.

A final health check can be given to the pregnant mare one month before foaling. This is a good opportunity to plan the birthing process and have everything ready.

A late pregnancy scan can be performed transabdominally to assess the foal position, heart rate and the foetal fluids and placenta. A flu and tetanus booster vaccination is a good idea at this point if it has not already been done.

Tyrrells Equine Clinic have a range of breeding packages available – for more information on these see our information sheet or contact 01763 287744 / office@tyrrellsequine.co.uk

