



Licensed Equine Plasma Products

FOAL MANAGEMENT: Infection and Sepsis

Key Points

- ➔ The highest rate of death for horses is in the first 2 days of life
- ➔ The key to managing your foal through this period is **P**reparation, **P**roblem recognition and **P**rompt intervention (3Ps)
- ➔ Have a veterinarian examine your foal within 12-24 hours of birth
- ➔ The biggest killer of foals relates to infection
- ➔ Make sure your foal gets colostrum
- ➔ Make sure your veterinarian gives your foal plasma (stock some yourself)

According to a USDA study, the death rate for foals aged less than 30 days is 4.9% (4.9 foals die per 100 born) which is significantly higher than the rate for horses older than 30 days of age (1.8%). The main cause of death in these foals is related to infection caused by injury, wounds and trauma, septicaemia, and failure of passive transfer (FPT).

There are two critical periods in the first 30 days of a foal's life – the first 48 hours and the period between 21 days and 30 days. Criticality for both periods relates to the level of immunoglobulin in the foal's blood.

FPT is a well documented condition in new-born foals whereby they fail to get sufficient quantities of colostrum from the mare. Colostrum contains very high levels of immunoglobulin, or antibodies, which are essential in helping a foal fight infection. Simple wounds or birth injuries in FPT foals can easily spread to the blood (septicaemia) and other organs which are often then fatal.

Ensuring that foals get sufficient immunoglobulin in the first 48 hours of life is therefore critically important to survival.

Immunoglobulin passed from the mare to the foal via colostrum has a limited half-life and by the time a foal is 3 weeks of age only approximately 50% of the mare's immunoglobulin remain. Therefore, the period when the foal's immunoglobulin levels are starting to wane, and before the foal's own immune system is fully functional, is also a critical risk period for infection.

Ensuring that foals have sufficient immunoglobulin at 3 - 4 weeks of age is also critically important to survival.

One method of guaranteeing a foal receives sufficient immunoglobulin and providing it with the best start in life is through the use of plasma. Plasma derived from healthy adult donors contains large amounts of immunoglobulin (between 20 and 30 grams per litre) and can be stored frozen for long periods prior to use. It is therefore a convenient and safe source of guaranteed quantities of immunoglobulin.

Don't leave it to chance. Make sure your foal gets plasma!

Visit www.foalsbeststart.com to find out more