

## Links

**Newfoundland Pony Society:**

[www.newfoundlandpony.com](http://www.newfoundlandpony.com)



For more information, please contact your Regional Veterinarian, the Newfoundland Pony Society or the Animal Health Division.

Other information pamphlets are available online from the Department of Natural Resources at:

[www.nr.gov.nl.ca/agric/](http://www.nr.gov.nl.ca/agric/)

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# Reproduction of the Newfoundland Pony: Care of the Newborn Foal and Postpartum Mare



## Introduction

There are currently less than 400 registered Newfoundland Ponies. To ensure the survival of this heritage breed, it is essential that we optimize the health and survival of all Newfoundland Pony foals. Owners of breeding mares should become familiar with all aspects of equine reproduction. This pamphlet is one of a series of three dealing with reproduction and deals with the care of mares and newborn foals.

## Foal Care

Most mares have good mothering instincts, care should be taken not to crowd the newborn foal and prevent the mare from doing her job. However, some intervention will improve the foal's health and well-being. Following is a list of recommendations.

1. Ensure that the membranes are cleared from the foal's head, especially the nostrils and mouth.
  - Ensure that the animal is breathing. If not, rub the foal briskly with a cloth or straw. Elevate the hind-end and hold the head upright to encourage fluid to drain from the airways. If this fails to stimulate breathing, mouth to nose resuscitation should be attempted. If veterinary attention is not available immediately, it is imperative that the handler initiate resuscitation.

- If the umbilical cord does not break during delivery, allow it to break naturally as the mare stands after foaling. Do not cut it as this may cause bleeding.
- Dip the naval in a dilute hibitane or bridine solution.
- Allow adequate time for the mare to clean her foal. If the mare fails to do this, the foal should be dried with a clean cloth or straw.
- The foal should be standing within 1 hour and suckling within 90 minutes. Receiving adequate colostrum, or first milk, within 12 hours of life is very important. This milk is rich in antibodies which will protect the young foal from many infectious diseases.
- Watch for the passage of the first bowel movements (meconium). If 24 hours has passed without consistent, yellow coloured feces, an enema is required.
- All foals should receive an examination from a veterinarian at 24 hours of age, unless a problem warrants an earlier examination.

## Care of the Postpartum Mare

Mares require close observation for approximately 10 days after birth. This will ensure that any complications arising from the foaling will be dealt with promptly.

Mares should be allowed to rest quietly for up to one hour after foaling. When she does rise, she should be allowed to bond with her foal with minimal intervention. Mares should be checked for adequate milk production; the udder should be full and milk easily expressed from teats. Watch the foal suckling to ensure that he is finding the udder and sucking normally. The mare should also be checked for foaling injuries. Providing that there is no evidence of complications, the mare can be examined by a veterinarian at the 24 hour neonatal check-up.

## Vaginal Discharge

A small amount of odourless, bloodstained discharge during the first 24 hours is normal. The mare should be monitored for any abnormal discharge for 10 days postpartum. These would include a heavy, bloody discharge or a foul smelling discharge.

## Mastitis

Mastitis is an infection in the udder that can cause the mare to become quite ill. If the mare refuses to allow the foal to suck, the udder should be checked for signs of infection. These include a hot and painful udder and milk that appears abnormal.

## Exercise

Exercise during the postpartum period is important as it encourages the uterus to shrink to normal size, and stimulates appetite and bowel movements. If the mare will leave the foal, she can be exercised lightly for about 20 minutes, 3-4 hours after foaling. Mare and foal can be turned out the day after delivery in a small paddock for a short time. Gradually increase turnout time to a full day by the end of the first week.

## Diet

For the first 2 days after foaling, the mare should be fed a laxative diet such as bran mashes to avoid constipation. Good quality hay and unlimited water should also be offered. There are special nutritional requirements for the lactating mare. Care should be taken to ensure that the diet is supplying adequate nutrition.

## Deworming

The mare should be dewormed 2-5 days after foaling with a product suitable for a lactating mare. This will protect both mare and foal from a heavy worm burden that may occur near 10 days postpartum.

## More Information

Further information can be obtained from the first (Breeding and Broodmare Management) and the second (Foaling) pamphlets; from the many magazines and books on horse care, from your Regional Veterinarian and from knowledgeable horse people in your area.