

PREPARING TO BREED YOUR MARE

by Dr. Laura Harris

Successful breeding of your mare(s), whether by natural cover or by artificial insemination, depends largely on your preparation efforts. Organization and preparation will maximize conception and consequently lower expense (and frustration). Talk openly and often with your veterinarian and with the stallion owner / agent so that plans are made and problems are efficiently resolved well in advance of the anticipated breeding dates.

Mare preparation -- open (non-pregnant) mares

- 1) November
 - a) forced lighting schedule to create a 6 hour night (dark) interval
 - b) normal fall vaccinations and deworming if not already done (see FAQ page on this website)
 - c) labwork - CBC, blood chemistries, thyroid test, uterine culture and cytology
- 2) December
 - a) begin teasing and charting heat cycles - chart daily so that you have a minimum of a 2 month working calendar before the intended breeding date
- 3) January
 - a) finalize stallion selection and paperwork for the stallion contract (mare breeding contract) with the stallion owner / agent
 - b) review shipping method and collection schedule for individual AI stallions - this will tell you when you can breed each week
- 4) January / February
 - a) normal spring vaccinations and deworming (see FAQ page on this website)
- 5) February 15 and later
 - a) begin breeding as the mare comes into heat
 - b) use teasing chart to plan ahead and notify stallion handler and your veterinarian of expected "in heat" dates
 - c) plan dates for natural cover or shipment of semen for AI based on teasing chart, past experience with the individual mare, and veterinary examination of the cervix and ovaries

Rebreeding (spring breeding) - pregnant mares

- 1) October / November
 - a) rhinopneumonitis vaccines as needed (recommended in months 5, 7, and 9 of pregnancy)
 - b) normal fall vaccinations and deworming (see FAQ page on this website)

- 2) December
 - a) rhinopneumonitis vaccines as needed (recommended in months 5, 7, and 9 of pregnancy)
- 3) January
 - a) prefoaling vaccinations and deworming (see FAQ page on this website)
 - b) be sure foaling stall is ready
 - 1) large enough?
 - 2) warm and dry?
 - 3) wind proof?
 - 4) escape proof (for the foal)?
 - 5) lights installed - even if temporary - before delivery day
 - c) be sure stallion contracts are finalized so that you can begin breeding as soon as the mare is ready after foaling
- 4) At foaling
 - a) see articles on this website: 1) A Baby Horse Is Coming, 2) Post Foaling Check List, and 3) Foaling Kit
 - b) veterinary exam for normal foals can be done in the first 24 - 48 hours after foaling - should include a blood test for IgG
 - c) mare health exam - be sure to tell the examining veterinarian if you are breeding the mare on the foal heat or later so uterus can be treated if needed
 - d) placental exam - be sure the complete normal placenta has passed -- if not treatment is required - save the placenta for your veterinarian in a cooler with plenty of ice or in a bucket of water in the shade (away from dogs and coyotes)
- 5) "Foal heat"
 - a) 7 to 10 days post foaling
 - b) lower fertility than later heats in most mares because the uterus is not fully recovered from pregnancy
- 6) "Thirty Day Heat"
 - a) second heat after foaling

Whether you have one mare to breed or many, accurate record keeping and frequent (daily) teasing are the most important aspects of an organized, successful breeding program.

Teasing is a very important in every breeding program. If you are unsure about any aspect of teasing: timing, behavior, record keeping, or just how to tease a mare -- please ask. While some geldings will serve as teasers, mares will uniformly respond faster, more aggressively, and more accurately to an intact stallion. The sexual interaction of teasing between the stallion and the mare will actually improve cyclic activity in the mare and conception even in a shipped semen (AI) program. Please plan ahead and organize your breeding program to include daily teasing of mares. If you do not have stallion on your property, consider getting a miniature horse stallion to use for teasing - they are easy to

house and handle. Or, consider sending your mare to a facility that offers daily teasing with a stallion.

The object of any breeding program is to produce a healthy foal the following year, but, first, we have to breed the mare successfully. Be sure your mare is healthy before the breeding season begins. Complete your contracts with the stallion owner / agent early. Tease the open mares frequently and aggressively. Keep accurate records. Communicate often and openly with your veterinarian.