

Equine Health Solutions

Keith L. Wagner DVM
18011 E State Route 58
Raymore, MO 64083
816-322-8040

www.equinehealthsolutions.com

Nutritional Guidelines for Your New Foal

A healthy foal will grow rapidly, gaining in height, weight and strength daily. From birth to age two, a young horse will achieve 90 percent or more of its full adult size, sometimes putting on as many as 3 pounds a day.

Colostrum, the mare's first milk, is very high in antibodies. Foals are born without protection from disease and rely on the antibodies they absorb from the colostrum for immunity, until about six months old. A simple test done by your veterinarian within 18-36 hours after birth on the foals blood serum, can evaluate the IgG antibody level. If the level is inadequate, intervention by your veterinarian is needed. It will be necessary to infuse the foal with plasma containing antibodies which will provide additional protection. The foal can then be re-tested to ensure that maximum protection has been achieved.

As early as 10-14 days of age, a foal may begin to show interest in feed. By nibbling and sampling, the youngster learns to eat solid food. Its digestive system quickly adapts to the dietary changes.

As the foals dietary requirements shift from milk to feed and forage, your role in providing the proper nutrition gains in importance. Here are some guidelines to help you meet the young horse's needs:

1. Provide high quality roughage (hay and pasture).
2. Supplement with grain or concentrates beginning at about 4 weeks of age.
3. Start by feeding 1 percent of a foal's body weight per day or 1 pound of feed per month of age.
4. Weigh and adjust the feed ration based on growth and fitness.
5. Foals have small stomachs, so divide the daily ration into 2-3 feedings.
6. Make sure feeds contain the proper balance of vitamins, minerals, energy and protein.
7. Feed the foal separate from the mare so it can eat it's own ration.
8. Remove uneaten portions between feedings.
9. Do not overfeed. Over weight foals are prone to developmental orthopedic disease.
10. Provide unlimited fresh, clean water.

Work with your equine practitioner to develop a total health care plan for your foals, weanlings and yearlings. Regular examinations, vaccinations and needed de-worming is essential to ensure your foal is getting the care that it needs.

“Providing Quality Solutions for the Health of Your Horse”