

Virginia Equine PLLC

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YOUR NEWBORN'S FIRST FEW DAYS

THE FIRST HOURS:

- The foal should alternate between resting and trying to stand. Rubber mats can be very slippery, so if the foal's hind legs keep sliding out, add some more dry bedding so that he/she can get some traction.
- The mare should be alternating between resting, eating, and trying to pass the placenta. If the placenta is hanging out, **DO NOT PULL ON IT!** You can knot it on itself to keep it from dragging or hitting her hocks. If necessary, a wet hand towel can be tied onto the placenta to make the part hanging out heavier. If it doesn't come out within four hours, call us. If it does come out, save it so that we can examine it.
- Once the foal stands, he/she should start making sucking motions with his/her mouth. It's okay if he/she sucks on objects in the stall as he/she explores. If more than four hours pass without the foal sucking more on the mare than the stall, please call.
- When the foal gets near the udder, you will be tempted to push its head to the teat. Resist the temptation. If necessary, you can guide the teat into the foal's mouth from the opposite side of the mare. If you push or grab the head, the foal will pull back and move away from the udder.
- The foal should try to pass manure within 2 hours. It will be very dark and sticky pellets. The mare may lick them, which is fine. If the foal is pushing hard and nothing is coming out, you can give a warm (but not hot) enema. Many commercial enemas made for humans are available at your local pharmacy. These are perfectly appropriate for your foal. After the first day, the manure should be sticky, orange-colored paste.

THE NEXT MORNING:

- We should come out to check the mare and foal between 12 and 24 hours after birth. We will check the foal and draw blood to make sure the foal got its immunity from the mare's first milk. This is called an IgG test.
- The foal should be splitting its time between naps, nursing for a couple minutes at a time, and exploring the stall.

TWO WEEKS AFTER BIRTH:

- When the mare comes into heat 7 to 10 days after foaling, the foal may develop mild diarrhea: this is fine and does not require treatment as long as the foal is active, strong, and nursing well.
- The foal may eat the mare's feces. This is okay as well, as this is how the foal gets the correct bacteria it needs to digest forage and grain.