Help Your Mare Have a Safe Delivery

If your mare has made it through 11 months of pregnancy, you're almost home free. Labor and delivery, while momentous, are generally uneventful. In most cases, you will simply need to be a quiet observer – if, that is, you are lucky enough to witness the birth. Mares seem to prefer to foal at night in privacy, and apparently have some control over their delivery. Because most mares foal without difficulty, it is usually best to allow the mare to foal undisturbed and unassisted.

What you can do, however, is prepare your mare for a safe and successful delivery.
Follow these suggestions from the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) to help the new mother and baby get off to a great start:

1. Program your veterinarian's number in your phone well in advance of the birth.

2. Keep a watch or clock on hand so you can time each stage of labor. When you're worried or anxious, your perception of time becomes distorted. The watch will help you keep accurate track of the mare's progress during labor.

3. Wrap the mare's tail with a clean wrap when you observe the first stage of labor. Be sure that the wrap is not applied too tightly or left on too long, as it can cut off circulation and permanently damage the tail.

4. Wash the mare's vulva and hindquarters with a mild soap and rinse thoroughly.

5. Clean and disinfect the stall area as thoroughly as possible and provide adequate bedding.

6. Consider using test strips that measure calcium in mammary secretions to help predict when the mare will foal. Sudden increases in calcium are associated with imminent foaling.
7. If a mare is taking longer than 30 minutes to deliver the foal, call your veterinarian immediately.

For more information on labor and delivery and postpartum care for the mare and foal, ask your equine veterinarian. Additional information can be found on www.aaep.org/.

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