

Barrow
Veterinary
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BVS Upcoming
Events:

4/17 TSC Equine Day
@ Covington location.
Q&A session with Dr.
Thomas, vaccines
available. Call for
more info.

BVS Hoof Beats

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Podia-what?

Podiatry (pronounced poh-die-ah-tree) is the study of the foot. If you've been into horses long, you've heard "No foot, no horse." It is a commonly held opinion among veterinarians that between 70-80% of lameness cases will involve the foot. Therefore, adequate therapy should always involve some aspect of podiatry, even if only in a supportive role.

Podiatry includes the anatomy, physiology and biomechanics along with the farriery applied to the hoof. Normal foot function, breakover, the manner in which the foot lands, the duration of the weight bearing phase of the stride and

injuries related to landing and weight bearing are all affected by trimming and shoeing.

With this being said, it is imperative that in every

lameness case, the trimming and shoeing are evaluated. Podiatry, however, is no longer relegated to current lameness cases. It has become a substantial tool for lameness prevention.

To accomplish these evaluations, we incorporate observation, physical exam, gait analysis, radiographs (before & after farriery), diagnostic blocks and anesthesia. This leads to consultation and planning with the farrier. The long term goal is to provide a solid base of support and resulting long term soundness to each of our equine companions and athletes.



Digital radiography, as well as new technologies in shoeing materials, have significantly advanced the science of podiatry and farriery. This is a wooden shoe setting. The screws are not through the hoof; they help hold casting material in place.

To Culture or Not to Culture?

So, you have a mare you'd like to breed. You want to save time and money. How do you know if a uterine culture is a sound investment?

Any mare who has previously foaled, had a positive culture, or spent an "open" season may be a candidate. Just because she

doesn't look infected or have a tipped vulva doesn't mean she's clean. Culturing prior to beginning the breeding process can certainly save money in the long run. Some stallion owners even require the mare to have a clean culture prior to the first shipment, so be sure to check your contract. Plus, knowing what organisms you may be up

against is beneficial – it can save you time and drug costs. Maiden mares are not routinely cultured, but any mare that doesn't get pregnant in a timely manner with sound breeding management should be evaluated. Remember: knowing the problem is half of winning the battle.

Foaling Out—It's almost time!



A month out from foaling

First-time mares should be desensitized around their back end and teats so they are prepared for the little one's attempts to nurse. If the mare has had a Caslick's procedure (suturing of the lips of the vulva), the Caslick's **must** be removed about 4 weeks before the due date. Four to six weeks prior to foaling your mare should receive all her vaccines to increase antibody levels in the colostrum (first milk produced by mare). Deworm your mare starting at 90 days prior to foaling – ivermectin at 90 days, double dose Strongid at 60 days, ivermectin at 30 days.

A Place for Foaling

If the weather is good, an outdoor area such as a small pasture or pen close to the human observer may work just fine. Many breeders today, however, opt for a large stall – at least 12-by-24 feet or 16-by-16, – bedded deeply with clean straw. A clean area is necessary.

Foaling Kit

The basics include a 7% iodine solution or 1% nolvosan for treating the foal's umbilical stump, a clean cup, a plastic "sleeve" in which to place the mare's tail, bandages to wrap the mare's tail, 2 large clean bath towels, and the **BVS** office and emergency telephone numbers.



Telltale Foaling Signs

As the actual foaling time approaches most mares give one or more indications that they are ready to give birth. A few, however, show no or very subtle signs, and many a horseman has been surprised to see a new foal standing next to its dam at morning feeding time! Some clues to watch for include the lengthening and softening of the vulva area under the tail, and a loose, sunken look to the teats in some, but not all mares about 24 to 48 hours before giving birth.

It's time!

Immediately prior to foaling, most mares will stop eating, begin pacing, and often break into a sweat. They might feel hot to the touch and their veins will "pop out" a bit. Once the mare's water breaks, the foal should be delivered in less than 20 to 30 minutes. If the mare begins straining to deliver and delivery does not progress, **the vet should be contacted immediately.** The normal presentation for a foal as it is born involves the two front feet appearing first, one slightly in front of the other, with the nose not far behind and resting on the front legs. Any other presentation is cause for an emergency call. Rest assured, however, that well over 90 percent of foaling mares need little or no help delivering healthy foals, and surgical intervention is rare.



Those First Minutes

Experienced horsemen and veterinarians often encourage the attendant to break the membrane sac encasing the foal as soon as possible if the foal hasn't already. If the foal doesn't begin breathing immediately, brisk rubbing with a towel may encourage that first gasp. A brisk rub with dry towels even if the foal is breathing is quite helpful. Special attention should be paid to drying the ears, especially in cold weather. Frostbite can occur quickly.

It is no longer considered necessary to tie off or cut an umbilical cord, and may do more harm than good. After it has broken naturally from the dam, soak the stump in a cup filled with the iodine or nolvosan solution rather than simply spraying it on. The healthy foal should be on its feet and trying to nurse within 2 hours of birth. If not, a call to Dr. Barrow or Dr. Thomas is in order.

Keep in mind that a human attendant's main job is to be adequately prepared, work along with nature, and use common sense at every step. The reward is a bright future for the healthy mare and foal, the possibility of economic return, and, best of all, years of enjoyment.

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Where horses aren't just our job,
they're our passion.