

Foal Heat Diarrhoea



What is it?

Foal Heat Diarrhoea is the name given for the short periods of diarrhoea often seen in foals aged 5 to 14 days old who are otherwise fit and healthy. It is seen in 80-95% of normal foals, with no breed predisposition.

What causes it?

Originally it was called 'Heat Diarrhoea' as it often occurs at the same time as the dam's first return to oestrus, and was thought to be caused by a change in hormones in the

mother's milk. However, new studies have failed to make an association between foal heat in the mare and the onset of diarrhoea in foals. Furthermore, it is often seen in orphan foals and those fed on milk replacer!

The most recent theory suggests it's a natural change in the foal's natural gut flora that causes the diarrhoea, particularly as the foal begins to ingest other feeds.

What does it look like?

Foals will remain bright, sucking well and have a normal temperature. The diarrhoea is mildly loose and watery but often malodorous, but will clear up within 3-7 days. Hair loss and scalding of the perineal area is commonly seen.

How can I treat it?

Treatment is usually unnecessary as the diarrhoea is self-limiting. However, as with all diarrhoea it is important to keep the perineum clean and dry and prevent scalding over the hindquarters by using petroleum jelly or similar. We can provide supplements to help foals with diarrhoea which we usually have in stock and can be supplied without examination of the foal. If you are concerned, just give us a call!

When should I call the vet?

Prognosis for Foal Heat Diarrhoea is very good, however any foal with diarrhoea needs to be closely monitored as foals with diarrhoea can deteriorate rapidly. If the foal goes off colour, the diarrhoea is prolonged or you notice any other symptoms please get in touch with us ASAP.

South Moor Equine



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