

Foaling: Stages of Labor

Stage 1: The beginning of labor pains until the water breaks

The mare acts colicky or uneasy. Signs include sweating, pawing, pacing, urinating and defecating frequently and lying down. This may last minutes to several hours. Interfering with the mare at this stage will delay stage 2.

Stage 2: Delivery of the foal

Average duration for delivery is 20 minutes, but this stage can last several minutes to an hour or more. The mare usually lies down to deliver. Be sure her backside is not tight against a wall so she has room to deliver.

Foaling should progress quickly once the water breaks and hard contractions start (note time on Foaling Diary). If 20 minutes have passed and nothing is starting to show at the vulva, call GLEWC at 920-779-4444 immediately.

Normally within minutes of the water breaking, a clear-milky white sack appears at the vulva. The foal is within this sack. You should see two front feet – one often slightly ahead of the other. The bottoms of the feet should be facing the mares hocks and then the foals muzzle on top of its front legs. **If any abnormal presentation (i.e., only one foot and nose, head only, feet upside down, etc) is seen, more than 20 minutes have passed without the foal progressing OR, if at any time, a red carpet-like sack is protruding from the vulva, call GLEWC at 920-779-4444 immediately.**

Once the foal is delivered, make sure the sack is cleared from its nose and head. Allow the umbilical cord to break on its own. As soon as it breaks, dip it with navel dip.

Stage 3: Passing of the placenta

The placenta is usually passed 30-60 minutes after foaling. **Call your veterinarian if the placenta is not passed within 3 hours post-foaling. Very serious illness to the mare can result if a portion of the placenta is retained or left inside the mare.** Once passed, the placenta should be saved for examination by your veterinarian.

At any time, if a red carpet-like sack is protruding from the vulva or any abnormal presentation is seen, call Great Lakes Equine at 920-779-4444.

