



## **GETTING YOUR MARE IN FOAL – HOW EQWEST CAN HELP**

### **What is the breeding cycle of the mare?**

Mares are seasonal breeders, mostly cycling between March and October. Each cycle lasts around 21 days, comprising around 6 days in heat and 14-16 days not in heat. The mare ovulates (sheds the egg into the uterus) towards the end of her heat period when fertility is highest. If the mare conceives she will not come back into season. If she does not conceive she will return to heat around 14-16 days after the end of the last heat period, or often in a shorter period if she has a uterine (womb) infection.

### **What is the normal breeding success rate?**

The pregnancy rate in mares covered or inseminated in any single heat period is very variable, ranging from 35-75%. The overall average pregnancy rate at the end of the season is about 70-80%. Older mares, those with poor conformation of the vulva and those that have had complications during or after their last foaling are more difficult to get in foal. Older (12 years or more) maiden sport horse mares can be especially difficult to get in foal.

### **Why is timing important?**

Mating or insemination should ideally take place as close to the end of the heat period as possible. This ensures that the sperm is at its most viable when it encounters the egg in the uterus. Timing is especially important with AI as the semen has usually been collected the day before and its viability is slowly declining.

### **What are the keys to success in breeding?**

- Ensuring that the mare's genital system is healthy and free from infection. This is accomplished by a **pre-breeding examination** and subsequent treatment if required
- Ensuring the mare is mated or inseminated at the right time. This may require several veterinary examinations during any heat period
- Ensuring that she has ovulated and there are no post-mating uterine infections. This requires a post covering/insemination examination
- Ensuring that she is examined for pregnancy as soon as possible after covering

### **What happens in AI?**

- In-season mares are scanned every day or every other day to monitor the growth of the follicle (egg). When it is sufficiently large and close to ovulation, the stud is notified. Often

an injection or implant is given to the mare at this time to be doubly sure ovulation occurs when expected

- When the stud is notified that a mare is likely to be ready for insemination the following day, semen is collected from the stallion using an artificial vagina. It is checked to make sure it is of adequate quality, mixed with a special fluid to increase its volume and to help maintain sperm viability during transport, and divided into single mare doses. It is then chilled and sent for transport in a special insulated container.
- The semen arrives and is injected into the mare's uterus. The next day the mare is scanned to ensure she has ovulated. If not, a second dose of semen may be ordered and the process repeated
- After 14 days the mare is scanned again. It should be possible to determine if the mare is pregnant, and to check for twins. If the mare is not pregnant the growth of the follicle for the next cycle is monitored and, when the mare comes into season the process is repeated. This continues until the mare is in foal or the breeding season has advanced too far to continue

### **How successful is AI?**

There are three key elements in successful AI

- the mare's uterus must be confirmed to be healthy before she is inseminated via a pre-breeding check
- the semen must be of good quality and correctly transported. This is largely outside of our control. Stallions vary in semen quality, and semen handling procedures on some studs may be unsatisfactory
- the mare must be inseminated at the right time

All of the above require a considerable degree of veterinary involvement and depending on the fertility of the mare, necessarily some expenditure on veterinary fees

### **How can EqWest help to get your mare in foal?**

Our job is

- to deal with any veterinary problems that might interfere with your mare's fertility
- to ensure your mare's reproductive tract is healthy before breeding,
- to check her regularly to determine when she is ready for covering or inseminating
- to inseminate her
- to check she has ovulated afterwards and her uterus is healthy
- to check her for pregnancy and ensure she is not carrying twins

### **How does EqWest charge for breeding work?**

#### **Pre-breeding assessment £40 plus VAT**

- A full breeding history of your mare is taken first, and then we examine the mare (vulva and reproductive tract) including ultrasound scanning of the ovaries and uterus. A CEM (clitoral) swab is taken.
- Depending on the shape and angle of the mare's vulva, a Caslick's procedure may be required at this stage. It is a minor surgical procedure performed under sedation and local anaesthetic to close over the top part of the vulva, preventing contamination of the vagina and reducing risk of uterine infection.

- If your stud requires EVA or EIA (Coggins test) blood samples for these will be taken at this time
- The £40 charge does **not** include lab fees, visit fee or the Caslick's procedure if required.

### **Insemination package for chilled and fresh semen**

Here we charge on a **per cycle** basis. If the mare is not in foal after the first cycle, scanning and checking starts again as part of the next cycle

We are pleased to offer an optional scheme where the mare owner pays a 'single' fee per cycle to cover costs of the routine veterinary work necessary to help get your mare in foal and monitor the development of the early pregnancy.

Many mares need considerable monitoring and treatment before and after covering. The costs of these procedures can soon mount up but if you have subscribed to our single fee scheme all of these costs will be covered enabling you to have a more accurate idea of associated costs during that breeding season.

#### **Inclusive treatments**

- Insemination and semen evaluation.
- Routine hormone drugs (not Regumate / Ovulate)
- Regular ultra sound scans before and after insemination
- 14 day pregnancy scan and if necessary twin foal reduction
- Routine consumables

#### **Not included**

- Visit fees
- Stud fees
- Boarding fees at the Clinic
- Investigation of problem breeding mare
- Lab fees
- Pre breeding assessment and clitoral swabbing
- Sedation as necessary

Wherever possible we would like to scan and inseminate mares at the practice in Lamerton. We have specialised examination stocks here to facilitate the process and can properly evaluate semen, prior to insemination. This obviously means that as a mare owner you would save on visit fees and sedation costs. Mares can be boarded at the practice to prevent daily travelling - please ask for details and costs.

#### **Cost: £180 per reproductive cycle + VAT**

The fee for the above breeding cycle package will be payable to EqWest Equine Veterinary Clinic Ltd before the start of each cycle. Veterinary work will commence once payment has been received. Extra costs not covered by the package fee will be invoiced separately under our usual terms.

## Notes

- Routine drugs include prostaglandin and Oxytocin. All other drugs such as ovulation induction agents (e.g. Chorulon, Ovuplant), Regumate, antibiotics and sterile fluids are not included.
- A problem mare is defined as one which in the opinion of EqWest's veterinary surgeons has a disorder likely to cause reduced fertility. If a mare is suspected to be problem breeder the owner will be contacted to discuss the steps required to improve fertility as well as likely cost.

The procedures mentioned above are standard stud medicine practice. Any queries regarding these procedures should be directed to Paul Hallum BVMS MRCVS at EqWest on 01822 613838 Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm. The breeding season is a very busy time so we thank you in advance for your patience.

Mares for frozen semen insemination need more frequent veterinary monitoring which can prove expensive. Please contact the office to discuss if you are thinking of using a stallion available by frozen semen.

**CHILLED SEMEN VETERINARY SCHEME 2008**

Name of Mare:

Name & Address or Owner:

Daytime Telephone Number:

Mobile number:

Stallion:

Contact details of stallion owner:

**I DO / DO NOT WISH TO JOIN THE SCHEME**

(Delete as appropriate)

Signed.....Date.....

Please return completed form to Eqwest Equine Veterinary Clinic