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A Tradition of Leadership and Excellence in Equine Medicine

Breeding season Allen B. Riggs, D.V.M.

June 2001

Another breeding season has come and gone, and I hope that it was a success for all. As everyone is winding down and looking forward to summer vacation there are still things that can be done to get ready for the next breeding season!

Let's start by placing the mares in two separate categories:

The pregnant mare: Once in foal let's keep them that way. Are these mares given a progesterone supplement (Regumate, Hydroxyprogesterone) to maintain pregnancy? I like to test progesterone levels between 14 and 17 days post ovulation, usually at the time of the initial ultrasound. If the mare has a low progesterone level, usually below 4.0ng/ml, or the mare has poor uterine tone, I will begin progesterone therapy. Most mares need to be maintained on progesterone until they are about 120-150 days in foal. At that time the uterus is the primary source of progesterone, not the ovaries, and the mare can safely be weaned off progesterone.

Another group of mares that may be on progesterone are mares that had a twin reduction at the initial pregnancy check. I usually begin progesterone therapy on these mares once the twin is reduced and check progesterone levels at 40-45 days bred. This is when the endometrial cups form and normal levels rise. If the levels are OK the mare can be weaned off progesterone. We should also mention mares that have a history of late abortion. Many people feel that these mares should be supplemented in spite of their (progesterone) blood levels. Although difficult to back this up scientifically there may be merit to this with the exceptional mare.

The barren mare: Do these mares have endometritis? Mares will continue to cycle until late summer and can be treated during these cycles in hopes of getting them ready for the next breeding season. I recommend that a cytology be taken with each culture, as this is probably the best way to diagnose a yeast infection. Once these mares are found to be free of infection, if they don't already have caslicks, she should be evaluated to make certain it isn't necessary. These mares are now ready to be put under lights so we can get an early start on them next year.