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A Tradition of Leadership and Excellence in Equine Medicine

Endometrial biopsy Dr. Allison S. Foil

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If you lay awake at night wondering if your old barren mare will EVER have another foal again, maybe you should consider having your veterinarian biopsy her uterus. Endometrial biopsy is not for all barren mares but can be useful in the older mare with a sub-fertile history.

An endometrial biopsy can help determine a mare's ability to conceive and deliver a live foal. If you have a mare that has been barren for 2 years or more despite heroic efforts, this may be a procedure you should consider. It should be noted that this option is only considered after a thorough breeding soundness exam and uterine culture and cytology has been performed.

Barren mares that have a history of chronic uterine pooling are good candidates for the procedure. If the mare's biopsy indicates that she has a greater than 80% chance of carrying a foal to term, then you may be more willing to pay for the urethral extension surgery to prevent the uterine pooling. Another good candidate for endometrial biopsy is a mare that has had a history of abortions two consecutive years or more. The biopsy is not a "crystal ball" but it may help you determine if you want to financially invest again this year in the hope of producing a foal out of this mare.

The best time to obtain an endometrial biopsy is when the mare is in estrus (in heat). If your mare is not currently cycling then you may try putting her under lights for 5 hours or more during the night to decrease melatonin production from her brain. Too much melatonin causes a mare to go in transition, which prevents estrus. The light bulb should be greater than 200 watts. Dr. J. Kevin Hahn once told me that if you can read a newspaper under the light, then it is sufficient.

Once the biopsy is performed, the pathologist can rate the severity of the lesions and determine expected foaling rates. As I said earlier, this may aid you in determining how much money you are willing to spend on your mare this upcoming breeding season. Furthermore, I hope you can rest better at night with one less thing to worry about.