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Feeding the Inability to Nurse Foal Feeding the Orphan Foal

Foal - Inability to Nurse: Feeding Frequency and Volumes

Foals – Approximate Volumes and Feeding Intervals – Mare’s milk or commercially available mare’s milk replacer. (If the foal is hungry and having no digestive upset, increase the amount fed gradually)

These are the minimum:

Age (Days)	Feeding Interval	Feeding Volume	Total Volume/Day (liters)	% of Body Weight
1	45 min	150 ml	4-5	8 - 10
2	1 hour	250 ml	6	12
3 - 5	1 hour	333 ml	8	15
6 - 8	1 ½ hours	550 ml	10	18
9 - 11	1 ½ hours	667 ml	12	20
12 - 14	2 hours	1 – 1.2 liters	12 - 14	20 - 22
> 15	3 hours	1 – 5.2 liters	12 - 16	19 - 25

Note: 30ml is approximately equal to 1 fluid ounce; therefore, 1 measuring cup (8 oz) is equal to 240 ml. 1 liter is slightly greater than 1 quart; 1 liter = 1.06 quarts

Orphan Management

- For foals orphaned on the 1st day of life, an important consideration is provision of high-quality colostrum that contains adequate immunoglobulins. Colostrum absorption is greatest within the first 4-6 hours from birth; and after 24 hours from birth, the small intestine is no longer permeable to colostrum immunoglobulins.
- Foals do better with a foster mare: the mare's presence provides for an increased immunity, improved viability, and normal behavior development for the foal.
- For your information: Lactation Induction-hormone protocol to induce lactation in a non-pregnant mare or enhance milk production in a poor milk producing mare. AAEP Proceedings / Vol. 52 / 2006 pp259-260.
- Milk requirements:
 - During the first week of life, healthy foals will nurse up to seven or eight times per hour, with each nursing bout lasting 1 – 2 minutes.
 - Need for colostrum [minimum 500ml, ideally 1-2 liters in first 6 hours] don't forget: absolute "need for" colostrum is IgG quality dependent, not necessarily the quantity or volume!!!
 - 10-15% B.W. first few days.
 - 25% B.W. thereafter.
[a healthy foal will consume 25-30% of its body weight in milk per day]
 - Measure growth: 1-2Kg per day [2 – 5 lbs].
 - Need for a companion.
 - Commercially available milk replacers are the preferred milk substitutes for foals; however, cow's milk is suitable if some of the fat is removed and sugar added. One recommendation is to feed 2 percent fat-skimmed milk to which dextrose has been added at the rate of 20g/l [40 ml of 50 percent dextrose per liter of 2% cow's milk).

Feeding frequency

- 12-24x first day [no more than 500ml/feeding].
- Q2hrs. By day 3-4.
- 4-6x per day by day 7; can now skip nights.

Bottle feed???

- Aspiration pneumonia danger.
- Use a lambs nipple or human nipple.
- Cow nipple too large.
- Cover foal's eyes to prevent untoward bonding.
- Maintain sterility of buckets, bottles, teats.
- Foster mare...peppermint on foal's head, hides scent.

Bucket training

- Easy management.
- Foals tend to overeat, or gorge.
- Eliminates human bonding, behavior problems.
- Start training with bowl...not as deep, or a light colored bucket; yellow buckets reported to be best color.
- Tease to bowl with finger or teat.
[Note: gloved finger is best; be certain fingers are clean].
- Maintain sterility of buckets.
- Wean at 3-4 months [10 – 12 weeks].

Feeding Summary

- Warm milk prior to feeding.
- Use clean equipment: bottles, nipples, pans, and pails.
- Mix milk replacer two times daily.
- Follow instructions!!!
- With GI upset, try another brand, 2% cow's milk plus dextrose, or goat's milk [last resort].
- Go with the bucket...companionship necessary.
- Add good quality roughage and foal pellets, 16%, beginning 10-14 days...Foster Mares best.
- Fresh water should be available to the foal at all times.