

What you should know about Failure of Passive Transfer of Immunity (FPTI) in foals

With foaling season upon us, it's helpful to understand the importance of providing good quality colostrum to newborn foals. Mare's colostrum is full of antibodies (immunoglobulins) that provide immune protection until the foal can develop an immune system of its own. Without colostrum, the foal is highly susceptible to infections, which can become severe enough to cause sepsis and possible death!

What are risk factors for FPTI?

Factors that can prevent foals from receiving colostrum include prematurity (inability to stand and suckle), colostrum leakage from the mare prior to foal ingestion, poor quality colostrum (endophyte-infected fescue toxicosis of the mare), or even rejection of the foal by the mare.



Healthy foals should begin nursing within 1-2 hours after birth and should get at least 1-2 liters of high-quality colostrum within the first 8-12 hours to ensure adequate maternal immunity.

What happens if a foal did not receive colostrum, or it was poor quality?

Your veterinarian will perform a newborn foal examination and take a blood sample from the foal to assess the immunoglobulin (IgG) concentration status.

General treatment for FPTI:

Treatment will depend on the age of the foal but could include administration of the mare's colostrum or a colostrum replacer by nasogastric tube or administration of equine plasma through an intravenous catheter. Supportive care for dehydration and antimicrobial drugs for potential for sepsis (blood infection) will also be warranted in some cases. Prognosis can be good when started quickly!

It is always better to seek veterinary attention sooner rather than later when dealing with neonatal foals. If there is ANYTHING abnormal about your newborn foal, get your veterinarian involved right away!

Do you feel more prepared for your next foal?

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