

# Orphan Foal Management

Great Lakes Equine Wellness Center recommendations:

- ✔ Most maiden mares that initially seem to reject the foal will be fine with some positive reinforcement (offer treats/grain when the foal nurses), sedation (acepromazine or reserpine), and sometimes hormonal supplementation is needed (for example, domperidone) to increase milk let down. This requires time and dedication but is often rewarding in the end. The key is to allow the mare as much contact early on, and not to take the baby away from her. They can be separated by a short wall, so the mare is able to sniff and smell the baby when you are unable to observe. If after, 24-48 hours the mare is still not accepting her baby, it may be time to look at other options.
- ✔ Mare's milk is the best nutritional choice for the foal. If the mare is available and you are able to milk her, then offer the foal her milk hourly at least initially for the first day or two.
- ✔ Colostrum (from the mare) is extremely important for all foals. A normal 45 kg foal should receive 1 liter of good quality colostrum in divided feedings within 8 hours of birth. In addition, it is very important to have the IgG evaluated at around 12-18 hours of age. This can be done by your veterinarian. If a foal has inadequate colostrum absorption, plasma can be given at this stage to help prevent any serious infections in the foal.
- ✔ If the foal is still an orphan at this stage, it can be offered a foal milk replacer, for example Mare's Milk Plus made by Buckeye ([www.buckeyenutrition.com](http://www.buckeyenutrition.com)) or Progressive Nutrition's Foals First Milk Replacer ([www.prognutrition.com](http://www.prognutrition.com)). The foal should eat approximately 10% of its body weight the first day or two and should be eating 25% of its body weight by 10 days of age. This can be given at least every 2 hours and once the foal is trained to drink from a bucket left for free choice consumption during the day. These formulas are acidified so they will not spoil when kept at room temperature for up to 12 hours. A bucket trained foal is a



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## Orphan Foal Management continued

lot less work for the owner and the foal will be less likely to have an oral fixation on people.



How to calculate the amount given: a normal size foal is approximately 45 kg (100 lbs), 1 kg = 2.2 lbs. Therefore, a foal that weighs 45 kg should eat 10% of its body weight the first 24 hours,  $45 * .10 = 4.5$  liters. This amount should be given at the minimum every 2 hours so you divide 4.5 liters by 12 = 0.375 liters. Then multiple 0.375 by 1000, because there are 1000 ml in 1 liter and that equals 375 ml every 2 hours. This amount will change daily as the foal grows. A normal, healthy foal should gain 0.5-1 pound per day, therefore the foal should be weighed daily.



By 10 days of age the foal should be drinking approximately 25% of its body weight. Therefore this calculation is weight (pounds) divided by 2.2, this will give you the weight in kilograms (kg).  $\text{Weight (kg)} * 0.25 =$  amount in liters to be given over a 24 hour period of time.



In addition to offering the foal milk replacer, a foal milk replacer pellet can be offered, for example Buckeye Foal Starter or Progressive's Foal's First Milk Pellet. This can be fed free choice starting from birth on up to 6 weeks of age. After this time, the foal can be offered 2-3#/day/100 pounds.



Foals can also be offered a good quality grass hay starting by at least one month of age.



In addition to the milk replacer & milk replacer pellets, free choice water should be available for the foal to drink at all times.



It is also very important for an orphan foal to have daily interaction with other horses.

Please feel free to call with any questions or concerns.

