

WORMING CONTINUED

Other important parasites are:

- Intestinal threadworm (*Strongyloides westeri*)
 - These parasites can be passed through the mare's milk to infect the foal, and can cause diarrhoea
 - Worming the mare around foaling can help prevent this occurring
- Small redworm (Cyathostomins)
 - These roundworms can cause severe to fatal disease, and youngsters are particularly susceptible
 - Their larvae burrow into the large intestine lining becoming "encysted", and if the horse is wormed can emerge simultaneously in large numbers, causing severe inflammation of the gut resulting in the horse becoming very unwell

Worming protocols for adult horses are not appropriate for foals.

Your vet can advise you on creating a protocol tailored to your mare, foal and property.



GUT HEALTH

Foals are born with very few bacteria in their gut

When they suckle for the first time, thousands of healthy bacteria in the colostrum (first milk) populate the gut and the microflora (healthy bacterial population) starts to be established.

However, the foal's environment is full of bacteria, no matter how clean it appears, and if this healthy microflora is not established well and quickly, pathogenic (harmful) bacteria can get into the gut, multiply and cause disease, including diarrhoea or, in serious cases, sepsis (blood infection and shock due to infection). Foal Heat Diarrhoea is a common problem, which is not caused by infection, but can cause illness and dehydration to develop around 5 to 15 days after birth.

Weaning also affects gut health – when the foal's nutrition changes from milk to hard feed and grass, the gut bacteria may become imbalanced, and digestive disturbance can result. Stress due to weaning can also upset the balance and cause problems.

How can I help my foal's gut flora?

Giving your foal a supplement (after it has had its first feed of colostrum) containing a prebiotic and postbiotic will encourage the healthy bacteria to colonise and establish a thriving microflora. This microflora forms a basis for the foal's general health as it grows older. Prebiotics are substances which provide nutrition and support for the healthy bacteria to grow, and postbiotics mimic the effect of these bacteria, hence providing the right environment in the gut.

By using prebiotics and postbiotics to support the healthy gut flora there is no need to supplement with a probiotic (live bacteria).

You should also consider giving a supplement at other times when the gut flora may be disturbed, such as foal heat, weaning and any diet or management changes.



FOAL IDENTIFICATION

It is a legal requirement to identify all foals with a passport and microchip. This must be done before the foal reaches six months of age or by December 31st in the year it is born (whichever is later).

Why does my foal need a horse passport?

- The passport is an important document which identifies your horse in the case of loss or theft
- If a horse is stolen, the passport system means that it cannot be sold on because it is illegal to sell a horse without a valid passport. It is also illegal to buy a horse without a passport
- It is also an official document which ensures horses that have been treated with certain prohibited drugs do not enter food intended for human consumption
- Horses should be accompanied by their passport when they are transported

What is microchipping?

Microchipping means that individual horses can be uniquely identified by anyone with an appropriate scanner.

Microchipping a foal is a quick procedure which must be performed by a vet. The microchip is a small device, similar in size to a grain of rice. It is inserted via a needle into the nuchal ligament of the neck from the left hand side. It is virtually impossible to remove even under surgical conditions.

If you want to sell or move the foal without its dam or foster mare it must be microchipped and have a passport.



WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

- Make sure your vet is aware that your mare is in foal and when foaling is expected
- Discuss a preventative health plan with your vet for both your mare and foal including:
 - Vaccination
 - Worming
 - Nutrition
- Consider a gut health supplement for your foal
- Make sure your foal has a microchip and passport

Where can I go for further information?

- Your vet
- Visit [msd-animal-health.ie](https://www.msd-animal-health.ie) and search under Species Horses for information on a range of diseases and their management





Further information
is available from:

MSD Animal Health Ireland Ltd
Red Oak North, South County Bus. Pk.,
Leopardstown, Dublin 18
www.msd-animal-health.ie