



MARYLAND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND / COLLEGE PARK • EASTERN SHORE

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OCTOBER EXTENSION HAPPENINGS CALL THE EXTENSION OFFICE TO REGISTER

- **Oct. 6**, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.: **Write Your Own Nutrient Management Plan**, Wye Research and Education Center, Queenstown. This course is designed for individuals who are new to the plan writing process. The goal is to work through the steps of writing a nutrient management plan from beginning to end. Use of the nutrient management recommendation software (NuManPro) will be integrated into the training throughout the day. For more information, go to <http://www.mda.state.md.us/pdf/write.pdf> or call 410-841-5959.
- **Oct. 10 and 17**, 6:30 – 9:00 p.m., and **Oct. 14**, 8:00 – 9:30 a.m.: **Horse Owners' Seminar**, Agricultural History Farm Park, Montgomery County. Field trip to Potomac Horse Center on Oct. 14. (There is a \$20 registration fee for materials and light refreshments. For more information and registration, contact Karen Walker at 301-590-2855.)
- **Nov. 18** – **University of Maryland Horse Conference** with keynote speaker Don Blazer. A day of learning about nutrition, health, pastures and business at the Anne Arundel Community College in Arnold. Register now by visiting http://www.equinestudies.umd.edu/Extension/horse_conference2006.html.

ASK THE EXPERTS

Q I have a mare that has been pregnant for 78 days. This mare has lost prior foals during the ninth or 10th months. I have read several pieces of research regarding progesterone levels and they appear to suggest that if the mare holds the pregnancy for the first 150 days, she would not benefit from daily doses of Regumate™ in the remaining days of the pregnancy. I have thought of sewing the mare up. Are there any side effects?

A What has caused the mare to lose the pregnancy in the ninth or 10th months? Was there a pre-existing placentitis, which is the most common cause of late term abortion? Twins? Illness in the mare? The major causes of late term abortion are rhinopneumonitis, twins, umbilical torsion, equine viral arteritis or a deformity of the foal; however, it is placentitis that accounts for fully one-third of late term abortions!

The mare can get placentitis either from endometritis – an infection prior to breeding – or through blood-borne pathways. Either way, it can cause the death and subsequent abortion of the fetus. It is more common in mares that have poor reproductive conformation, such as a tipped reproductive tract or sunken anus.

In terms of supplementing Regumate™ after day 150, your information is mostly correct. After 120 days, the mare's progesterone production drops quickly. The placenta forms "endometrial cups" beginning around day 35 which produce a hormone called equine chorionic gonadotropin (eCG). This in turn causes the ovaries to produce more progesterone. These endometrial cups are destroyed by the mare's own immune system



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by approximately 120 days of pregnancy. However, there are other progesterones that are being produced after this time (several of them); this makes blood testing for progesterone very difficult. Add to that the fact that the levels vary throughout the day, so one single blood sample on one single day won't tell you much. There is *anecdotal* information that suggests that using Regumate™ after day 120 can be beneficial in mares that continually abort late term. If you choose this route, be aware that progesterone will keep in a dead fetus or an infection. It also may reduce your mare's resistance to uterine infection.

If it is placentitis causing the abortion (often mares suffering from this will start to "bag up" early, maybe even leak milk, plus have vaginal discharge), you can talk to your vet about putting her on both Regumate™ AND systemic antibiotics such as SMZs. I have read of many success stories, and research shows that foals can be carried to term, live, with this regimen. If you suspect placentitis, your vet can perform an ultrasound to verify it (transabdominal – a combined thickness of placenta and uterus of more than 17.5 mm is thought to be an indicator of placentitis). Both Regumate™ and SMZs are available only by prescription and should only be used under the advice of a veterinarian, so discuss this with him or her first! You can read a very good article on the use of Regumate™ online at <http://www.equine-reproduction.com/articles/Regumate.shtml>.

Be very careful of having a Caslick's operation (whereby the edges of the vulva are sewn together) performed on the mare. If she is stitched up and gets an illness that causes abortion, significant damage to her reproductive tract can result, because the fetus will still try to exit.

Good luck!

Erin Petersen, MS, PAS
Extension Horse Specialist

This column is sponsored by the University of Maryland. The views expressed herein are those of the author and are not necessarily those of The Equiery's publisher or staff.