

Supporting gestation Feeding the pregnant mare



Forage

- During the 11 months of her gestation period, a mare will eat various fibre sources – sometimes pasture, sometimes dry hay – which requires monitoring and adjusting. Pasture and, especially, hay analysis is recommended to determine its nutritional value, particularly with respect to protein, calcium, phosphorus and, if possible, trace elements.
- Irrespective of the gestation stage: a pregnant mare must have at least 1% of her body weight in long-stem fibre in order to maintain an active and efficient digestive system.
- At pasture, particular attention must be paid to fescue, a plant likely to contain endophyte, a fungus that can cause, among other things, abortion, dystocia and complete halting of lactation.

Early gestation

- The breeder's main objective during the first two-thirds of the gestation period is to obtain and maintain the desired body condition, namely a score of 5.5 to 6.
- A source of good-quality fibre balanced by a vitamin and mineral supplement can meet the mare's needs perfectly if the supplement contains the necessary fortification, has good concentrations of each vitamin and mineral and is served in sufficient quantities. This is the case of the Equilizer and Optimal supplements.
- If the mare has difficulty maintaining the desired body condition score, then a complete feed is needed. Choosing a low-glycemic (low starch) complete feed may be advisable, especially for a pregnant mare. Intégri-T, FibraPlus and the Evolution line are all highly appropriate.

Late gestation

- During the last three or four months of gestation, the mare's needs change and her ration needs to be adjusted accordingly. During this stage, it is time to tweak the mare's body condition in order to attain a score of 6.
- Because of the rapid growth of the fetus, especially its skeleton, the mare's nutrition requires a particularly high intake of calcium and phosphorus, but also of copper, zinc and magnesium, always in the proper proportions.
- The mare's energy and protein needs also increase, but to a lesser extent. It is fairly easy to meet these needs by increasing the amount of feed served, as long as the feed is of good quality and formulated accordingly.
- At this stage, the mare's calcium and phosphorus needs increase a lot more than her energy and protein needs. To offset this uneven increase in nutrient requirements, providing her with a complete reproduction-specific supplement of minerals and vitamins is suggested. Optimal will provide sufficient vitamins and minerals to meet the mare's needs but also to ensure the proper mineral ratios and interactions conducive to the healthy and optimal growth of the fetus.

Final month of gestation

- During the 11th and last month of gestation, the time has come to serve the mare a complete feed formulated for her approaching lactation needs. Evolution Maternity, Omolene Maternity 300, Equilibrium Maternity XT or Simplici-T Pro are possible choices, depending on the temperament of your horse and your budget.
- Recent studies having shown that a high intake of starch in the mare's ration during late gestation and lactation increases the risk of developing growth problems. Choosing a low-glycemic complete feed such as Evolution Maternity is therefore preferable as it is rich in vegetable fat and fibre while being low in starch.
- Gradually increasing the daily amount of feed served to the mare during the last month of gestation (unless she is obese!) – will prepare her to consume the high amounts of concentrates that she will need in order to maintain good body condition during lactation, while providing the foal with a sufficient amount of the precious milk that it needs so much.