

Preparing your mare for pregnancy.

When deciding on whether to breed from your mare there are a few things that you need to consider:

- Is she going to be a suitable broodmare?

Many conformational and behavioural traits are hereditary. Mares should be selected for quality of type or performance and not simply because they are unsuitable for any other purpose.

- Do I have suitable facilities?

Although there is the option of sending your mare back to stud to foal, lots of people do want their mares to foal at home. A large stable will be needed as a foaling box and also a suitably fenced pasture is needed. If you keep your horse at a livery yard you may want to discuss this with the yard owner and plan ahead.

- Can I afford it?

Stud fees, livery charges and veterinary bills, both whilst getting the mare pregnant and at foaling can soon mount up, with no guarantee of a live healthy foal at the end of it.

Having decided that you are going to breed from your mare and having chosen a suitable stallion, she needs to be prepared to go to stud;

- Managing her diet over the preceding months is an important aspect of preparing the mare for pregnancy. Both obesity and malnutrition can lower fertility rates, therefore it is important to keep her in a moderate condition (where the ribs are palpable, the back level and no fat deposits on the crest of her neck, on either side of her withers or behind her shoulders).
- You need to check that her vaccinations are up to date and make a note of when her booster is due.
- It's also a good idea to have her teeth checked and rasped before she goes to stud.
- Most studs require your mare to have her back shoes removed before going to stud.
- A record of worming is very useful for the stud who will want to manage their paddocks to keep the worm population to a minimum. Some studs worm mares on arrival though.
- It's advisable to check with your insurance company that your policy covers your mare for breeding purposes, extra cover may be needed.
- Some diagnostic tests are essential before she goes to stud, and as different studs have different requirements it is worthwhile checking what your stud needs before arranging your vet to visit. Contagious equine metritis (CEM) is tested using a clitoral swab, while a blood sample is needed to test for Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA), Equine Infectious Anaemia (EIA) and Strangles. These tests can be carried out after the 1st January in the year that she is going to stud and ideally at least 10-14 days before she is due to go to stud so there is time for the results to come back.

Breeding from your mare can be an exciting and rewarding experience, being well prepared and communicating with both the stud and your vet should minimise the risks

involved with breeding from your mare and make the process an enjoyable and hopefully a successful one.

