

Gastrointestinal Ulcers in Foals

General Information

Ulcers of the stomach and/or intestine can occur in foals, as they do in people. Two of the more common causes are, as in people, stress and use of nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Stress can be obvious or inapparent. Stress can cause ulceration more quickly in a foal than in an adult horse. Neonatal and suckling foals are more likely to develop and ulcer if subject to such risk factors as:

- ___ Complications at delivery.
- ___ Minor or major illness.
- ___ Unusual environmental factors (adverse weather during foaling, foaling in an undesirable location).
- ___ Chronic problems associated with casting or splinting procedures, pneumonia, gastrointestinal problems, etc.
- ___ An unusual response to use of NSAIDs for relief of inflammation.
- ___ Transport.

In your foal, a contributing factor could be _____.

In foals, gastrointestinal ulcers usually involve the esophagus, stomach and first portion of the duodenum. They can occur and quickly heal, can take some to heal, or, in rare instances, can be extensive enough to cause scarring that narrows the opening to the duodenum. Surgery is the only recourse in the last situation.

Clinical Signs and Diagnosis

The signs of gastrointestinal ulcers in foals are depression, grinding of the teeth, salivation and rolling. Affected foals sometimes find comfort by rolling onto their back and propping themselves against the stall wall. Diagnosis is aided by observing these signs. The diagnosis of gastric ulcers can be confirmed by passing an endoscope into the stomach for visual examination. This may require referral to an equine hospital and could

further stress the foal, depending on the distance to the referral center and the capabilities of the veterinary endoscopist.

Important Points in Treatment

___ Medication may be recommended as a precautionary measure for foals in stressful situations.

___ Foals showing signs of gastric ulcers should be medicated. It is important to give the medication regularly.

Give _____ of _____ SC/IV/IM/PO ___ time(s) per day for ___ day(s).

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___ Consider instituting the following management changes:

Call Our Office If:

- You have questions concerning gastrointestinal ulcers in foals.
- You are having difficulty giving the medication or difficulty giving the medication on the regular schedule.
- Your foal becomes colicky.

We should recheck your foal in/on _____