

## **Routine Mare Work**

The practice does the routine work at a number of local studs and can deal with any mare requiring reproductive examinations. Routine work would include swabbing mares prior to covering, mares should have a clitoral swab prior to natural service, this is looking for any of the venereal bacteria (CEM, *Klebsiella pneumoniae* or *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*). Some studs will also require a blood sample to ensure the mare is negative for EVA (equine Viral Arteritis) and EIA (Equine Infectious Anaemia or "Swamp Fever") using a Coggins Test.

A clitoral swab can be taken at any time in the same breeding season as the mare is to be covered and the EVA blood sample should be taken within 28 days of being initially covered.

It is strongly advisable that mares also have a cervical or endometrial swab. This swab can only be taken if the mare is in season. The cervical swab not only checks for the venereal bacteria but for the presence of any bacteria inside the uterus and for non-infectious inflammation. The swab should be taken in the first day or two of the in-season period, this allows some time to treat any problem before the mare goes out of season.

Checking the mare's ovaries once she is in season allows the vet to estimate a likely timing of ovulation and aim towards the ideal situation of a single covering as close to the time of ovulation as possible. Each time a mare is covered an amount of dirt, debris and contamination is deposited into the uterus along with the sperm, therefore, to reduce the risk of an infection being set up, the number of coverings should be kept to a minimum. Also mares should have their vulval area cleaned with fresh water and their tail bandaged prior to covering to reduce any potential contamination. Disinfectants and soaps should not be used.

Internal examinations not only allow the ovaries and their follicles to be monitored, the uterus is examined for oedema, one of the indicators of how well in-season the mare is and also the presence of any free fluid in the uterus which is a warning sign for infections or inflammation of the inside of the uterus which will dramatically interfere with fertility.

Mares can be checked for ovulation, this is useful for knowing when ovulation occurred and it's timing relative to the last covering, for identifying multiple ovulations and therefore, the mares more likely to have twin pregnancies and for the identification of post-covering uterine infections, which are one of the most common causes of reduced fertility.