

Testing Your Mares Milk

Some think of this as an old wives tale, others rely on it with their hearts. We like to use in addition to other signs we are seeing a mare have that foaling is near. So far this test has been 100% accurate for us to date, however it may not work on all mares. We have not found a mare it did not work with yet, but there are never any guarantees with mares and foaling. It has saved us a lot of sleepless nights and false alarms. I like to start testing the milk as soon as I can express any from the udder at least once every other day or every couple of days until I start to notice a change in the pH and calcium, and then I start testing everyday morning and night. **BE CAREFUL!!!** Not all mares will allow you to touch their udder, if your mare has trouble with this you can slowly try to work her into it, my gently rubbing her belly and working your way closer to the udder. Stand at her side to do this, and reward her with a nice scratch each time you get close. If she acts like she will kick be firm and say "NO" or "QUITE", sometimes a light tug on the lead rope to correct her is needed. There are some mares that just will not allow this, and those you will need to just rely on the signs the mare is showing. Hope the test works for you as good as it does for us.

You don't need any special test, or any fancy gadgets, everything we use can be purchased at your local Walmart/Pool Supply.

Shopping list:

1. Distilled Water
2. Two Syringes' at least 6ml or more
3. Total Water Hardness test strips
(These can be purchased at Walmart in the aquarium section, or at your local pool supply company. Be sure they also test for *pH* levels.)

How to do the test:

Simply milk your mare, you will not need a lot, just enough for the test, about 1ml. After you have collected your sample draw up 1ml of the mares milk in one of the syringes' and put it in a small cup (thin shot glasses work really well for this), then with your other syringe draw up 6ml of the distilled water and mix that in with the mares milk, mix the samples together well by gently swiveling the glass around, (careful not to spill any). The take your water test strips (if helps to cut off the extra squares at the top since they will be of no use t you) dip the strip into the sample for **TWO SECONDS!** Remove and read immediately the results.

What does the results mean?:

When the mares milk is testing over 300 calcium you should be having a foal in the next 24-48 hours and when the *pH* drops below 7.2 you should expect a foal very soon. The higher the calcium levels are and the lower the *pH* is the sooner she will foal! Remember however Maiden mares can be very different, and while some will peak the calcium just before foaling others might not until after foaling. And some maiden mares do not even develop an udder until the foal has been born.

It is normal for a mare to test at Over 8.2 *pH* and lower than 50 calcium when you first start testing. This put together with the signs the mare is showing should result in higher attendance at foalings.