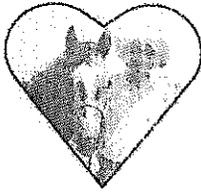


Hey Neighbor



## For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

### Mares Require Special Attention To Get In Foal

How can a person get a mare in foal?

Just breed her to a stallion is the simple answer. But, it's more complicated than getting a dog, cat or cow mated to have offspring.

"A mare will only accept a stallion when she is in a heat cycle and will only become with foal when a fertile egg ovulates," explained Kathy Anderson, University of Nebraska Extension horse specialist.

Unlike other species, horses are long day breeders, typically starting their estrus cycle, or heat period, in April, according to Anderson.

"A mare will usually cycle every 21 days, and the heat period will last from just a few days to sometimes over a week early in the year," Anderson elaborated.

However, it is during the last 24 to 48 hours that a mare ovulates, and she must be mated to the stallion during that time frame

in order to become in foal.

"During the beginning of a mare's cycle she might accept a stallion, but she likely will not conceive," Anderson said. "That is why breeders generally breed the mare every other day until she goes out of heat, to ensure that they catch her at the right time."

Signs of heat vary according to the individual mare, but it is usually fairly obvious to even the lay person. "The best way to find out if a mare is in heat is to tease, or expose, her to a stallion, or even a gelding might work in some instances," Anderson added.

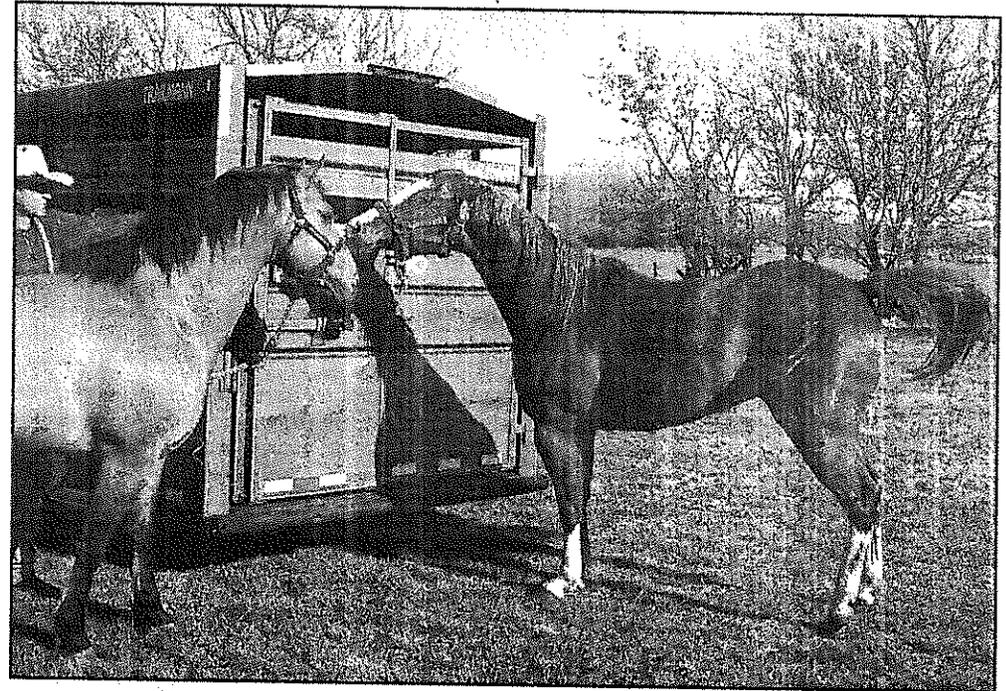
When the mare begins her cycle, she may pin her ears, bite, kick and chase away the stallion. Later, she'll likely run off other mares, but act interested in their male counterparts, even sometimes nuzzling the stud.

Obvious outward signs of estrus cycle are "winking," or opening and closing the

lower part of the vulva, and urinating in small amounts and holding the tail high for a longer time after urinating.

The mare may stand and rest with her tail slightly up or held to the side. She may also spread her legs and squat down, looking as though she is trying to urinate, and she may. "The urine is usually milky yellow," Anderson noted.

Other mares may not be so flashy, but have quieter heat cycles. It depends on the mare's temperament. Some mares will not show signs of heat unless brought near a stallion.



While ears pinned back is a sign of resistance, raising of the tail and throwing off water are indications a mare is coming into a heat cycle when exposed to a stallion.

"A veterinarian can tell when a mare is in heat by palpations, checking the ovaries and uterus," Anderson explained. Cultures and biopsies can also be taken to determine health in the uterus.

When the mare goes out of heat, she will typically not allow the stallion to mount. A new foal should, in theory, arrive 11 months, 11 days, 11 hours, 11 minutes and 11 seconds after the final mating.

If she is not in foal, the mare will return to cycle in 21 days, Anderson said.

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right to approach. An experienced stallion will act like any other horse around mares, and act "studdy" only when approaching a mare in heat.

"Veterinarians can assist in verifying pregnancy by ultrasound 14 to 16 days after the last mating. Palpations can be used to determine if the mare is in foal in 25 days," Anderson commented.

When a mare has a foal, she will cycle again in about nine days. "This is referred to as the foal heat, and she can be bred on this cycle if she didn't have any problems in foaling, and if the breeding won't make her next year's foal come too early," the horse expert said.

If the mare had a difficult time giving birth to the foal, she should not be bred until the second heat cycle. "The mare should be treated and her system given time to rest and heal before mating," Anderson recommended.

Although mares are easiest to get in foal in the

spring, in reality, some may conceive any time of the year. "I sure wouldn't turn a mare out with a stallion in the summer or fall if I didn't want her to be bred. It can definitely happen," the specialist said.

Mares can be brought into heat for breeding in February and March, so they'll have early-in-the-year foals. "This is done with 16 hours of artificial light on the mare starting three months before she is to be bred. A mare may start cycling in two months, but ovulation usually won't start until about three months," she said.

If a mare comes back into heat after more than two cycles' matings, the mare should be checked by a veterinarian for problems in her reproductive system. If no problems are found, a semen analysis is necessary for the stallion, said Anderson.

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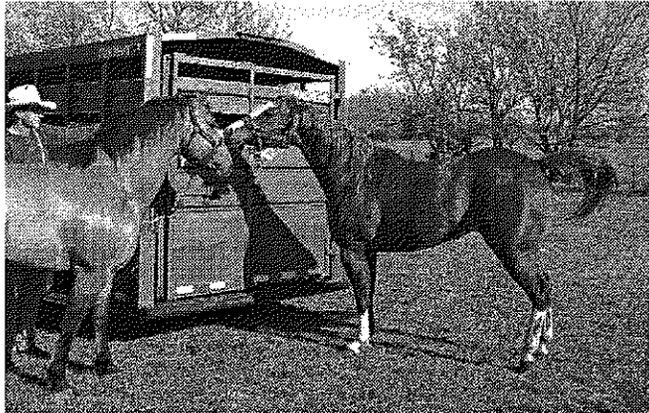
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