

Figure 1. Signs of impending parturition.

Figure 2. Cranial presentation of foal during delivery.

Figure 3. Normal expelled placenta spread out on a flat surface.

Length of the gestation period (duration of pregnancy) in the mare: 335 to 342 days.

Extremes range from 305 to 400 days.

Signs of impending parturition, the process of giving birth:

1. Enlarged and dropped abdomen. Some ventral tissue fluid.
2. Sinking in at paralumbar fossa.
3. Relaxation and softening of muscles and ligaments adjacent to the tailhead. Softening of cervix and vulva.
4. Filling of udder with colostrum. Waxing of teats due to excessive secretion by oil glands at openings. Usually occurs around 48 hours before parturition.

Three stages of parturition:

Stage I - Onset of labor

At first, foal is upside down (dorsopubic position).

Mare is restless - paces, lies down and gets up, sweats in patches as early as 4 hours before delivery.

No straining, but uterine muscular activity increases.

Foal rolls over to upright (dorsosacral position) with its head and forelimbs extended toward the cervix.

Cervix dilates until it is even with the vaginal wall.

Stage II - Delivery of foal

"Water breaks" - Allantochorion ruptures and allantoic fluid passes through vulva. If intact allantochorion appears first, it should be broken at once.

Stretched tissues cause strong contractions of abdominal muscles and the diaphragm.

Allantoamnion appears. Mare lies on her side.

Groups of expulsive contractions occur. Mare may get up and change position.

One forelimb and then the other appear. Strongest contractions occur to force the head and shoulders through the mare's pelvic cavity. When the foal's hips clear the vagina, straining stops.

Time for Stage II: Around 20 minutes.

As short as 10 minutes; rarely as long as 60 minutes.

Following delivery, mare lies quietly for 10 to 15 minutes with foal's hindlimbs still in the vagina.

Stage III - Expulsion of placental membranes

Uterine contractions continue. Walk a distressed mare.

Placental vessels collapse.

Allantochorion is turned inside-out and rolled down the uterine horns as microcotyledons are freed from endometrial crypts.

Time for Stage III: 1/2 hour to 3 hours after delivery.

Placental membranes spread out on a flat surface should be complete and have a normal velvety appearance due to the microcotyledons on the inside-out allantochorion.

Figure 1

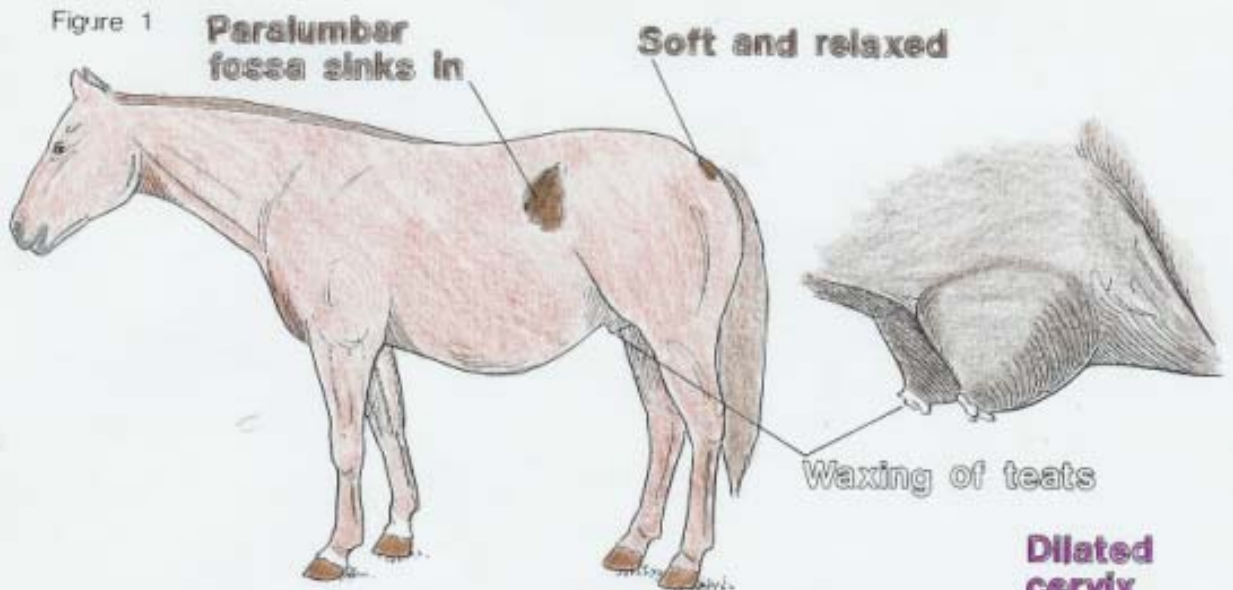


Figure 2

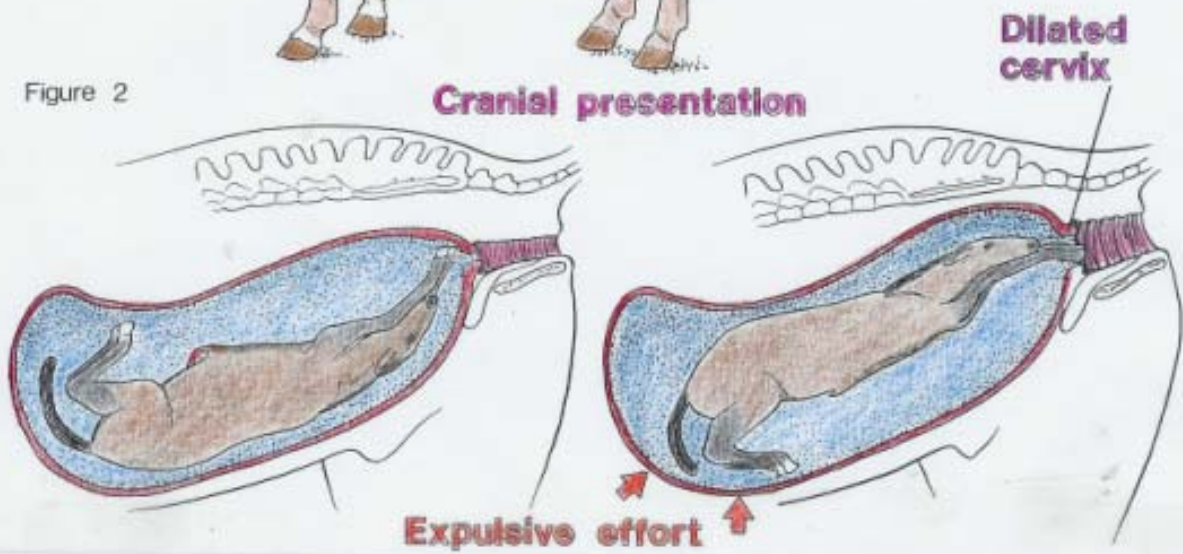


Figure 3

