

# *Foal Temperature*

The normal rectal temperature for a newborn or neonatal foal is 99.5-102° F. Healthy foals are born with the ability to regulate their body temperatures, and this is controlled by the autonomic nervous system; but this system is not fully developed until the first few weeks of life. The foal's autonomic nervous system will cause shivering and piloerection (hair standing on end) to generate and retain heat if cold, or cause sweating to cool themselves if hot via evaporative cooling.

Sick foals, however, often lose the ability to keep warm, which is why many sick foals in cooler climates can become dangerously cold (hypothermia). Foals in very warm temperatures can have an elevated rectal temperature when they are overheated. Newborn foals often have a fuzzy coat, so foals born into a very warm, humid environment have a disadvantage. Just because foals can sweat, does not mean that they are good sweaters, they might only get moist around the ears or face, since their autonomic nervous systems might not be fully developed yet.

When the humidity is high, sweating does not cool effectively. A foal that is overheated will have a greatly increased respiratory effort in an attempt, usually a futile one, to cool itself. High moisture content in the air when it is humid does not allow foals to cool themselves via evaporative cooling very well. In these situations, the best ways to cool down a hot foal is to body-clip the fuzzy, heat-retaining foal coat and bathe the foal in cool water. Furthermore, in hot temperatures, make sure your mare and foal have access to shade and plenty of fresh, clean water.