

# *The Foals First Days*

## *The Newborn*

1. **Foal's attitude.** If it is dopey, depressed or does not want to nurse, a veterinarian should be called immediately to evaluate the foal.
2. **Swollen, painful joints.** This can be a sign of joint ill, a serious infectious condition which should be treated by a veterinarian.
3. **Limb deformities.** Newborn foals can be down on their fetlocks or a little over at the knees at birth. Over the first few days of life these conditions usually correct themselves. If there is any inward or outward (sideways) deviation of the limb, especially at the knee or if the legs don't straighten in a few days a veterinarian should be called to evaluate the foal. The earlier limb deviations are treated, the easier they are to correct.
- 4) **Imprint Training.** There are substantial benefits to imprint training. Articles are available from several sources. The book and tape from Robert Miller DVM, "Imprint Training the Foal" it is excellent

## *The Suckling*

At birth, foals of light horse breeds weight only 8-10 % of their mature body weight. In the first three to four months birth weight should double. A foal will be 60% of its mature height, at the withers, at birth. In contrast, mature height at the hock is reached by six months of age.

The goal of the breeder is optimal not maximal growth at a consistent rate through the first year. Foals have a capacity to grow too quickly. It is also important to avoid growth spurts and setbacks. Excessive energy intake and too little exercise, as well as an imbalanced ration, can be factors leading to developmental orthopaedic disease (DOD or crooked legs).

The foal will have ample supplies of trace minerals stored in their liver if the mare is fed adequately during pregnancy. This is important because the mare's milk will not provide the suckling foal with adequate amounts of mineral necessary for proper bone development. Some mares are incapable of producing enough milk for optimal growth of the foal. It is recommended that foals as young as 15 days of age be provided with a commercial creep feed or, at least, a mineral-vitamin supplement mixed in with salt. Foals have a natural appetite for salt.