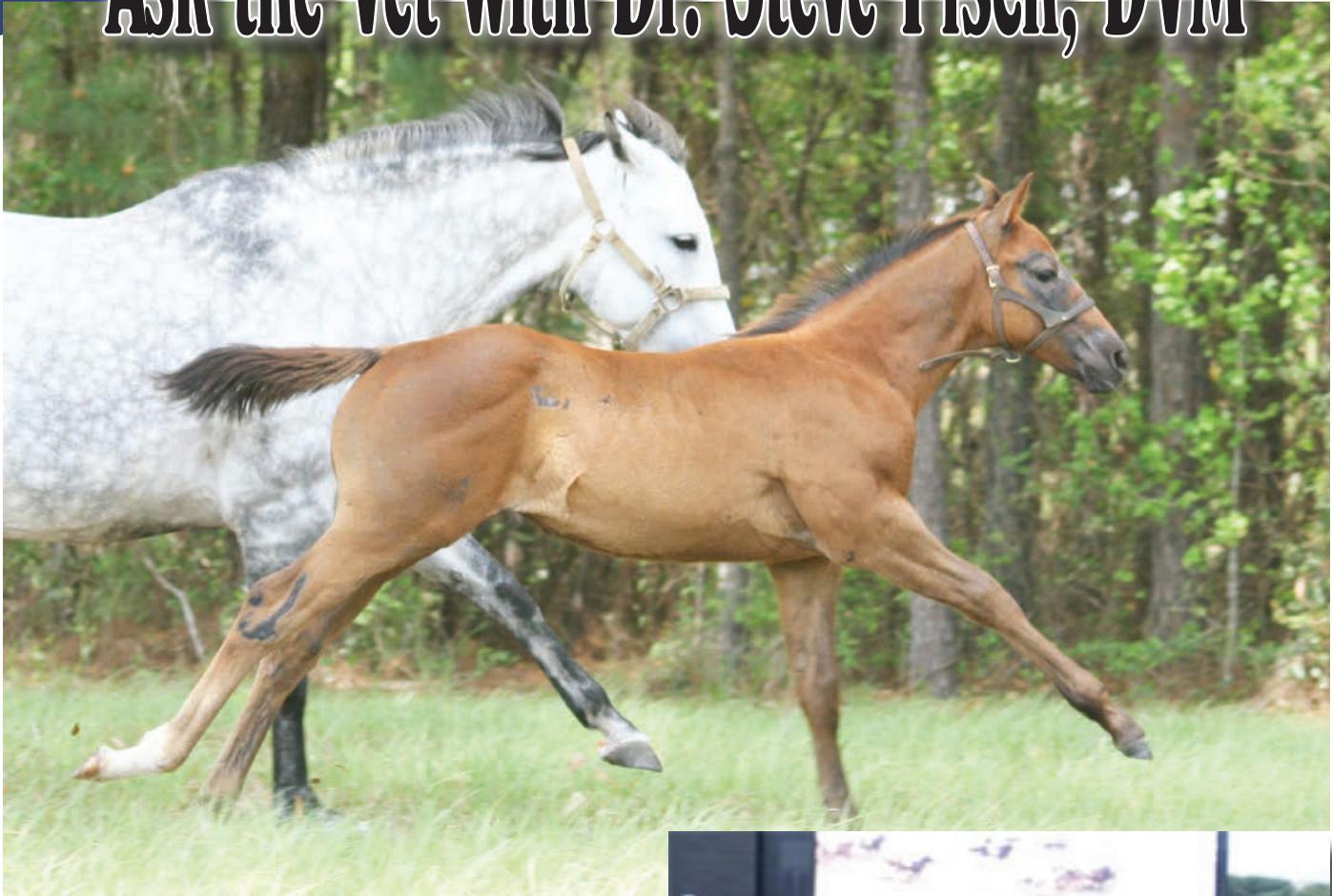


Ask the Vet September 2013

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Ask the Vet with Dr. Steve Fisch, DVM



Photos provided by 3 Fisch Photography

Dear Horse Resource - Ask the Vet,

We purchased two nice broodmares last year and had our first foals born this spring. We are new to this “raising babies” and are trying to make sure we do things right to raise strong, healthy race prospects that hopefully will go on to second careers someday. Is there anything special we should do to help them mature as strong and healthy as possible? And are there any special precautions we should take as far as their safety? Any recommendations would be appreciated.

*Thank you,
Concerned new “Mom”*

Dear new Mom,
Congratulations on your new broodmares and babies. To answer your questions we will assume that the babies are healthy at this point and that you chose broodmares with good conformation. We will also assume that you have the mares back in foal and want the babies born in 2014 to be sound and healthy and have second careers. As we have stated before, strong healthy babies with good conformation that have a good chance of staying sound for second careers start with a good selection of a good sire and dam. Genetics plays a strong role in longevity and soundness along with speed and ability.

Soundness also starts in the womb or uterus. Therefore the mare must be fed correctly from conception. The most critical time of pregnancy for proper nutrition is the last trimester. We actually keep our mares and foals on a feed formulated for lactating mares and growing foals



Above: Florida champion Mr Speed Wrench growing up strong in a large pasture. In this photo he is already halter broke and preparing to be a winner. Inset: Tsunami 09 winning the All Canadian Futurity at Ajax Downs in 2011 by a slim margin.

all year. There are several good brands out there but an example of a good brand is Nutrena’s Mare and Foal. It has the proper amount of micronutrients, the proper calcium and phosphorus ratio and the proper protein and energy levels to allow the mare to produce good quality milk, maintain her new growing pregnancy and to maintain her own health. The nutrient levels in a feed like Nutrena’s Mare and Foal also allow the growing foal to grow at the proper rate and to form sound joints and muscles with less chance of developmental orthopedic diseases (DOD) such as osteochondritis desicans (OCD), clubbed feet, epiphysitis and other developmental diseases.

Depending on the time of year and the grass availability we feed a mixture of two types of hay. In winter and early spring we feed a mixture of either 30% to 50% alfalfa or perennial peanut hay (both are legumes of equal nutritional value) and 50% to 70% good quality coastal Bermuda grass hay. We let the babies' and mares' body condition tell us whether to feed 30% legume hay or closer to 50% legume hay. When our grass is good we let the grass take the place of the coastal Bermuda grass hay but still feed the legume as a good source of calcium and protein. In mid to late fall we start back feeding the coastal Bermuda grass hay and feed it free choice until the grass is doing well again the following spring.



Above left to right: Photo of carpus valgus; Photo of foal post surgery; Photo of clubbed feet; Photo of foal post surgery. Both conditions can sometimes be prevented by careful daily monitoring. Below at right: weanlings learning to run and building strong joints and supporting structures in a large pasture. Future soundness and fitness begins at birth.

It is a good idea to carefully go over the babies and mares at least once weekly to evaluate their body condition and growth. This allows you to catch problems before they become difficult to correct. The mares should be kept at a body score so that you can feel their ribs but not see them. In some heavy milking mares this is difficult. These heavy milking mares must be feed more calories in the form of mare and foal feed or hay or both. Sometimes if the baby is eating well on its own and is in good health and weight and is four months old or older, then we may wean the baby from a mare that has difficulty maintaining her weight. Last month we talked about weaning methods that cause less stress for the mare and foal. We use the method that pulls out one or two mares at a time from the broodmare and baby pasture.

DOD's to look for each week are angular limb deformities such carpus valgus and carpus varus which are basically knock kneed and bow legged front or back legs. Clubbed feet are common problems in babies. One cause of a clubbed foot is a lameness problem in the non clubbed leg. Another cause is that babies tend to have short necks so as they lower their head to graze they tend to put the same leg back and the same leg forward. The leg that always goes back will have more of a tendency to become clubbed. If detected quickly, these conditions can sometimes be treated easily with stall rest. If detected too late, they many times need surgery or at least some type of corrective shoeing. Epiphysitis or inflammation of the growth plates is another DOD that can be treated by adjusting nutrition levels if detected early.

Big pastures to run and play in and good nutrition and good genetics make for sound horses. At this point we have the genetics and nutrition covered. Once we get the mares pregnant again they and their new babies are shifted to either a 17 acre pasture or a 35 acre pasture with rolling hills. This allows them to run and buck and play up and down hills with their friends. The socialization helps them mentally learn to live and interact with other horses and the play time in a large pasture helps development.



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Ask The Vet

We would like to help you get your horse health questions answered by a knowledgeable equine veterinarian. Submit your questions to us via email, we will present them to a qualified veterinarian that specialize in equine

health and then publish the question along with the vet's response in a future issue of The Horse Resource.

Ask away..... Send questions to us at: thehorseresource@msn.com Subject line: "Ask the Vet"

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