

SAA Testing for NEWBORN FOALS



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Foaling season is an exciting and busy time for veterinarians! New foals are arriving every day and you're fielding calls/texts from clients with photos and messages celebrating their arrival.

Below, I outline additional foal care resources to consider sending to horse owners and share 'why' I make Serum Amyloid A (SAA) testing a priority at newborn foal exams.

Use serum amyloid A testing at foal visits

Fortunately, most foals arrive without complications. Yet in nearly every case, measuring SAA levels in mares and newborns is a helpful diagnostic tool to have on hand. Make sure to pack a handheld reader on the way to mare and foal check-up appointments, especially when attending emergency calls.

- In foals, SAA levels greater than 50µg/mL are suspect and should be retested in 12 to 24 hours, with levels greater than 100µg/mL being highly suggestive of infection¹
- In fact, when SAA is used alone, levels greater than 100µg/mL could be used to differentiate infectious from noninfectious cases¹

SAA information to share with horse owners

A simple way to explain SAA testing to clients is that while IgG measures transfer of maternal antibodies to

the foal, it does not correlate with the protection or health of the foal. SAA is a biomarker that measures possible systemic infection and does correlate with health. If SAA is elevated, diagnosis and treatment is critical to get on top of it quickly.

SAA testing provides results within 10 minutes of examination, with no need to wait for samples to be shipped or lab results to be turned around, which is critically important in sick foals since their health can decline in a matter of hours. Incorporating SAA testing into your new foal exams along with IgG can be critical to identifying infection early, beginning treatment faster and supporting recovery.

- Stablelab is 30 times more sensitive than a thermometer at detecting infection²
- Incorporating SAA into routine screening exams for *R. equi* has been shown to reduce antibiotic treatment by more than 45% without negatively impacting foal health³

Additional Resources

Caring for a newborn foal is truly a partnership between you, your client and the other practitioners involved in their horse's care. The following online resources from the AAEP, research universities and veterinarian practices contain valuable information for horse owners.

Here are a few trusted sources I like to send along with clients during

foaling season:

- AAEP—"Foaling Mare & Newborn: Preparing for a Safe & Successful Foal Delivery"
- Colorado State University Equine Reproduction Laboratory Mare Services
- University of Pennsylvania—"Setting up Foals for Success: Ten Things to Do"
- University of Guelph Mare and Foal Care Tool and preparation slides
- Zoetis Equine Stablelab screening for *Rhodococcus equi* at endemic farms³
- Zoetis Equine Stablelab screening for mares and foals
- Zoetis Equine Stablelab newborn foal screening protocol

REFERENCES

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2. Oertly M, Gerber V, Anhold H, et al. The accuracy of serum amyloid A in determining early inflammation in horses following long-distance transportation by air. *AAEP Proceedings.* 2017;63:460-461.
3. McCracken JL. Evaluation of white blood cell, fibrinogen, serum amyloid A, and ultrasonographic grade to refine a *R. equi* screening program. *AAEP Proceedings.* 2019;65:522-530.

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