

Foal in Mare: Insights Inside the Foaling Mare, Fourth Edition

Edited by J Govaere, K Martens and A de Kruif (2013). DVD produced by Department of Reproduction, Obstetrics and Herd Health, Ghent University, Belgium. Price €60.00.

With the production of the DVD, *Foal in Mare: Insights Inside the Foaling Mare*, Jan Govaere and his co-workers from Ghent aimed to “provide veterinary surgeons and students, grooms, and horse owners with more ‘insights inside’ the foaling mare”. This was realised by creating a three-dimensional video model to visualise the entire birthing process and a broad spectrum of problems that may arise during equine parturition. The video and the narrative commentary is available in English, German, French, Spanish and Italian, with the text available also in several other languages which makes the DVD interesting for use all over the world. Within a relatively short time, the fourth edition of this DVD is now available. This already underlines that the thirst for visual information on equine parturition is great.

For a person teaching and explaining veterinary reproductive medicine not only to veterinary students but also to interns, residents, and sometimes horse breeders or lay persons, the teaching of parturition and obstetrics is among one of the most challenging topics. The largest part of parturition happens inside the dam and — in case of dystocia — the person assisting in the foaling process, eg by correction of a malposture will do most of their work in the dark, making it more or less invisible to everybody else around.

Equine parturition is a very fast process and any intervention has to be done rapidly, meaning that there is often only minimal time left for explanations or teaching. Inappropriate monitoring of pregnancy and parturition, failures to identify dystocia or inappropriate interventions do not only result in unnecessary death of the foal but also in infertility, injury or even death of the dam. A profound knowledge of the birthing process and associated problems in the mare is therefore also of great importance for animal welfare. Avoidable death of the foal or trauma to the mare does not only cause economic loss but may result in severe sickness of the animal. Any tool that is suitable in helping in the education of persons respon-

sible for the monitoring of late pregnant mares is therefore greatly appreciated. However, at present the availability of appropriate tools is sparse.

The idea of producing 3D cartoons that help to visualise the physiology and pathology of the birthing process in mares is thus intriguing. The DVD, *Foal in Mare: Insights Inside the Foaling Mare*, provides a series of beautiful cartoons that explain very nicely parturition in the mare as well as the most frequent problems at foaling. These cartoons really help to understand what is happening to the foal during parturition or how malpresentation, malposition and malposture contribute to dystocia and how they may be corrected. However, due to the fact that the proportion of the foal and the pelvis is somewhat distorted (the foal is too small and the pelvis too big, resulting in more space for the obstetrician than in real life), any correction shown in the cartoons appears far too easy. Unfortunately, the commentary is often very basic and sometimes incomplete. It does not outline that obstetrical intervention under clinical conditions may take much more time and can be a troublesome procedure. Also, not enough consideration is given to aftercare of the mare and foal (eg the importance of checking colostrum quality and immunoglobulin transfer to the foal). It is certainly not helpful for academic teachers who try to eliminate outdated opinions which still exist among horse breeders and some veterinarians if inappropriate advice is provided (eg an “antibiotic shot” to the foal as a prevention of septicaemia). The producers should ensure that the information given in such a wonderful DVD is up to the latest state of the art. At present, when showing the video, additional information or adjustment of some statements by a competent person is necessary to avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation. However, it cannot be expected for a DVD alone to take the place of a good textbook or lecture. In conclusion, the *Foal in Mare: Insights Inside the Foaling Mare* DVD is very helpful in providing a visual idea of foaling and equine obstetrics. It is a valuable tool to support teaching of those responsible for monitoring of periparturient mares.

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