

Horse News and Views



An international group of researchers is collaborating on the DNA sequencing of *Rhodococcus equi*, a major cause of pneumonia in young foals. Funded by Britain's Horserace Betting Levy Board, the group is being coordinated by the University of Bristol, and the sequencing is now underway at the Sanger Centre. Canadians, John Prescott (University of Guelph) and Julian Davies (University of British Columbia), are part of the team. Researchers are sequencing *Rhodococcus equi* strain 103, which was originally isolated at the University of Guelph. This will be the third horse bacterial pathogen to be fully sequenced. The first was the agent of glanders in horses, and the second completed was *Streptococcus equi*, the agent of strangles.

A handy suggestion from a number of veterinarians is the use of a 60-cc syringe to create a breast pump for mares. Cut off the needle end; smooth the cut edges with a piece of sandpaper and turn the plunger backwards so it faces the flanged ends of the syringe. The flanged ends are smoother, more comfortable for the mare and give a better seal. Clean the udder with a clean, warm, damp cloth. Place the open end (flanged ends) of the breast pump over the teat. Push upwards to get a seal and pull down on the plunger. Milk will fill the syringe as fast as you can pull down.

The normal gestation period of a mare is 340 plus or minus 20 days. The equine fetus becomes viable only in the last five days of gestation when fetal cortisol begins to rise. Survival of the foal is unlikely if it is removed from the uterus before this five-day maturation period. (Ref. LeBlanc M, Ascending Placentitis: What we know about pathophysiology, diagnosis and treatment. 50th Proceedings of the AAEP 2004: 127-143)

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