

Horse News and Views



Meconium is the mucilaginous material in the intestines of the full term or newborn foal ⁽¹⁾. It usually is evacuated from the foal within the first 3 hours of life. If the foal has not passed the meconium by 12 hours of age, treatment is required. Contact your veterinarian. The early signs of failure to pass meconium are restlessness, tail swishing, frequent posturing to defecate, tail elevation and disinterest in nursing ⁽¹⁾. The preferred treatment is the administration of multiple enemas. Many farm managers prefer to administer an enema to each foal at birth to ensure that meconium retention is not a problem. (Ref. ⁽¹⁾ Pusterla *et al.* Retrospective evaluation of the use of acetylcysteine enemas in the treatment of meconium retention in foals: 44 cases (1987-2002). *Equine Vet Ed* 2004;6(3):170-174.)

Haylage, or grass silage, is produced by cutting, harvesting young forages (grasses and legumes, such as alfalfa) and placing the material (loose or in bales) in a silo, plastic bag or wrapper to eliminate oxygen. The material will ferment, producing acids that will drop the pH of the material. The pH should drop within a few days to below pH 5. This will prevent the growth of bacteria and molds. Factors, such as maturity of the forage, dry matter content (DM) (ideal 55-60% DM) and anaerobic conditions are keys to good silage production. Variations from ideal conditions can lead to improper fermentation and the possibility of undesirable bacteria and molds, the worst of which is *Clostridia botulinum*. Horses fed haylage should be vaccinated with a botulism vaccine. For further information, refer to *Hay, Haylage and Treated Hay for Horses*, www.gov.on.ca/OMAF/english/livestock/horses/facts/info_haylage.htm

For further information, contact Dr. Bob Wright (519) 846-3412 or visit our web site: <http://www.gov.on.ca/omaf/english/livestock>



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