

Broodmare Nutrition...

Many broodmares have recently entered their third trimester of gestation. Nutritionally this is a very important time. This stage has considerable impact on the health of the foal and is crucial for proper development of the foal. Fetal growth and skeletal development is greatest in the last 3 months increasing the demand of nutrients provided to the fetus. The mares' weight will increase significantly in the last 3 months as well. In fact, the nutrient requirements of the mare at this stage are nearly as great as that of the lactating mare.

Prior to the last 3 months of gestation, the nutrient requirements of the mare in foal are similar to that of the mature horse in maintenance. This does not apply in the case of hardkeeping mares but rather to typical mares. Typical mares on pasture may meet their energy needs and therefore only a balancer pellet may be necessary to meet her nutrient demands.

As mares enter the 3rd trimester, their energy demands will increase as much as 20% and protein needs will increase approximately 30%. Good quality forage is the best way to meet this increased demand but introduction of a good quality, low glycemic feed such as *Equi-MAX* and *Equi-BALANCER* may be necessary to provide the mare with the energy she needs to maintain her condition score and provide for the fetus. Supplying a high fat, low starch feed reduces the risk of developmental diseases. Although, overfeeding the mare can be detrimental also. A fat mare effects reproductive efficiency in the mare and the leg development in the foal.

Pregnant mares also require increased copper, zinc, manganese and selenium and studies show the organic trace minerals are more available and more active in the body than their synthetic counterpart. These trace minerals reduce the risk of epiphysitis, DOD and white muscle disease. A deficiency can also result in calcification of the foal's aorta. Trace minerals increase liver stores in newborn foals supplementing mare's milk. *Equi-BALANCER* will provide these trace minerals in the organic form for premium bioavailability. Vitamin E works well with selenium for immune function and tissue repair, particularly when in the more active, plant-derived form **d-alpha-tocopheryl**.

Free choice, clean fresh water should be provided at all times. Frozen water pails and snow do not provide your horse with adequate water supply. If water is freezing, heated water pails should be considered. These are much less expensive than any health issues that can result from reduced intake of water due to frozen water pails.

Any changes to the ration should be done gradually over 7-10 days. Avoid changes of any sort close to time of foaling as this can cause problems with foaling.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding 3rd trimester rations or any other ration related concerns, contact Christine Hopman at chopman@minorbros.com or your local Minor Bros. 1-800-263-8397.