

broken prematurely. The cord should only be clamped and cut if it is too thick to break naturally or if it breaks prematurely and the foal is hemorrhaging. The navel should be treated with either Hibiscrub™ or iodine. Occasionally, mares try to foal standing up. If this happens the foal should be supported as it is born, at the level of the mare's vulva, so it does not fall to the ground and also allows blood to pass through the umbilical cord from the placenta. When the cord stops pulsing, it can be broken just outside the navel and the foal can be laid in the straw.



Fig 4. Appearance of the foal in correct forward presentation

### **What is third stage labour?**

During this stage the uterus contracts, which can cause the mare discomfort until the placenta is passed. When the mare stands, the placenta should be tied up into a ball so that it does not flap around her hocks, she does not walk on it and tear it, and so the extra weight will help its gradual separation from the mare's uterus ('cleansing'). When it drops from the mare it should be checked carefully to make sure that it is complete and, in particular, that both horn tips (blind 'ends' corresponding to the tips of the uterine horns) have been expelled and none has been retained inside the mare.

The placenta is normally passed within 1 to 4 hours of foaling. If the placenta has not come away by 8 hours, or the following morning, veterinary assistance should be sought. Retained placenta can result in infection of the uterus, toxemia, laminitis and even death.



Fig 5.

### **What happens after the mare has foaled?**

The mare usually stands and starts to lick her foal a few minutes after birth. She may squeal and 'nicker' at it and generally make a fuss over it. This is an important time of instinctive 'bonding' and this should not be confused by unnecessary interference.

Many mares will lie down again soon after foaling. This may be just to rest or may be because she is in pain (colic). She may scrape or roll indicating her discomfort. If this does not pass within an hour, or gets progressively more severe, this may indicate complications and your veterinary surgeon should be called, without delay.

The foal should make attempts to stand and suck and should have achieved both within 4 hours of birth. If both are bright and well there is no reason why they cannot be turned out into a small paddock for a few hours next day, providing the weather is suitable. Exercise is beneficial to help the mare's uterus to recover after foaling and to help the foal to strengthen and its legs to straighten.

### **Any questions?**

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions regarding the topics covered in this newsletter.