

Stud Newsletter 2010

Last season's results

We had a good season in 2009. The vast majority of reproductively healthy mares went home pregnant. We also managed to get three mares in foal which had previously failed to conceive or stay in foal. However in general terms it's still easier to breed from young, fit, healthy mares if you've got the choice.

Our stallion fertility request sheet has proved a useful tool, with studs now contacting us before sending the semen if they suspect there may be a problem. In one case the stud sent semen from two stallions as they knew there might be a problem with the first choice stallion. As it turned out the original stallion's semen was unusable but we got the mare pregnant using the second stallion. By anticipating the problem in advance we achieved a good result for everyone. Nevertheless we still received one lot of completely useless chilled semen from another stallion which resulted in one mare returning home without being inseminated. Please get the studs to fill in and return the stallion information sheet.

Already this season we have rejected one stallion on the basis of his poor semen quality. It's a lot easier to discuss this now than in a few weeks time at two o'clock in the morning when you've just thawed semen that is complete rubbish at the perfect time to inseminate the mare!

One disappointment in 2009 was our embryo transfer service for which we had no takers. We did flush two embryos from one of our polo ponies, Luchi, who has already had two foals by embryo transfer, but sadly neither resulted in a pregnancy. Jim is hoping to flush two of his mares this year after his trip to the Keros Embryo Transfer Centre.

Study at Keros ET Centre

At the end of April Jim is going to Passendale, Belgium to study for a few days at the Keros centre. Keros is possibly the biggest and busiest embryo transfer centre in Europe. In 2008 they transferred over 500 embryos with over 80% success rate. They also provide recipient mares for other practices, so although it is less convenient and more expensive, we could send embryos there if we run out of recipients here. We have a limited number of recipient mares available and some bookings for this year already. If you want us to carry out embryo transfer for your mare this year you need to book in advance.

Ensuring adequate immunity

Nature is a great thing and it is amazing how a foal can be up and galloping round a field within a few hours of birth. One thing that doesn't happen instantly is the development of immunity and the foal initially relies on passive transfer of immunity from the dam via colostrum. Normally this works well but if the foal fails to suckle or the dam's colostrum is

poor, which can happen when a mare has been dripping milk for several days before foaling, or

Storing colostrum

By far the best source of colostrum is milk from a mare kept on the premises where the foal is born. This will give the best protection against "local bugs". If you have a mare with surplus colostrum, then after her foal has had his colostrum you can milk off and freeze the excess. The best way to do this is collect it then fill several ice cube bags and pop them in the freezer. Ideally you need at least a litre for a foal. When needed thaw them slowly in warm water before use.

Equine and Farm Animal Practice

the foal is weak then he may not receive adequate protection. We can now check this at the first foaling visit with a simple blood test. There is some controversy about the best time to do this – too early and the foal hasn't had time to absorb the antibodies – too late and the options for boosting immunity are limited. Provided you have access to some frozen colostrum then the best time may be at 9 – 12 hours old. If the level is marginal the foal can be topped up with the thawed and warmed colostrum and rechecked several hours later. The opportunity for passive transfer is lost between 12 and 24 hours old. However the antibodies can be boosted by a plasma transfusion from a suitable donor at any time in the first couple of days of life. We keep some stored frozen plasma at the practice.

New Stallion Services 2010

We are branching out offering more stallion services this year. We are taking some young stallions to train them for AI and assess semen quality. We are also standing a stallion for Claire Lockhead. We could potentially take a third stallion in future.

We are still interested in setting up a semen freezing centre but the large capital cost is delaying investment until we have enough interest. We do have the facilities to market, store and distribute frozen semen. If you are interested in this please speak to Jim.

Noble Shot (Ire)

Our thoroughbred stallion had another good season in 2009 with consistently good fertility. His progeny should be starting to appear out and about in Aberdeenshire outside the polo world. We have been bringing on the youngsters born here since he came to Aberdeenshire, Biscuit, a five year old gelding will be playing polo regularly this season with my two sons, and we have also started really training two four year olds, Blitz and Tommy who are both showing great promise and will be starting playing chukkas as soon as it stops snowing!! If you are interested in using him and would like to visit then please give Jim a call.



Marchburn's First



We are standing Claire Lockhead's stallion, **Marchburn's First**, here this year. This is his first season at stud. Marchburn's First is out of a Keur mare and was graded first premium as a foal and listed as a Scottish Sports Horse Stallion at three. However Claire was keen that he had a competitive life before going to stud. Originally going showjumping then dressage, Marchburn's First has been evented for the past three seasons by Lucy Craigie. He is a kind and generous horse, extremely bold and reassuring cross country with lovely conformation, superb manners and a great jump. He has great presence and lovely paces. He

lacks top end speed which has prevented him eventing at the top level but would be perfect for producing really good multi discipline sport horses. He may be the perfect compliment for a thoroughbred mare to produce a really outstanding eventer.