



You may also wonder why you see images of foals nursing on each other when they have all of that “free choice” milk around! Suckling is an instinctual response for emotional regulation as well as consumption. Unfortunately, this nursing behavior can cause problems that arise from ingesting all kinds of WRONG. Nursing on the remnants of another foal’s umbilical cord can cause hernias and/or infections. We do all that we can to avoid these scenarios; I have “Macgyvered” many and varied pieces of anti-nursing equipment, generally to no avail. We know that once we leave, it is likely that they will find something to nurse on. Even if it is themselves. Particularly aggressive “NURSE” (the ones that go from foal-to-foal attempting to nurse and refusing to drink) will be put into what we call a “Focus Stall”. They can still see and touch noses with the other foals, but only have three or four small buckets of warm milk to deal with. Sometimes we must work around the clock with these guys for several days.



In time, the foals will be introduced to hay and grain but for now, we want to make sure that they are drinking. They need to be addicted to this milk. The artificial milk that we use is made to be a little “off-flavored” to prevent over-drinking. Once the foals are used to the taste, they will greet us with nickers and rush to a warm bucket with gusto. We put about two cups of vanilla yogurt into every five-gallon bucket of milk that we make. Do not even THINK about using plain yogurt. No way, no how will they drink it...just like the little kids that they are! The refrigerator in our Milk Room is literally filled with yogurt containers. Yes, the yogurt does a special little something on the flavor spectrum, but that is not the primary reason we use it. Yogurt is chock-full of probiotics that aid in the delicate digestive system of these foals. “Baby Oats” are another addition to the milk. When the foals get to be a few days old they love to find that “oaty” gruel at the bottom of the bucket. You can hear the slurping as they relish this little end-of-meal delicacy. The oats add bulk to the diet and, once again, aid in soothing the gut.

We do everything that we can to keep the foals’ digestive system running smoothly. Eventually, however, every foal has “Its Time”. People refer to this as “Mare-Heat-Diarrhea” with the belief that as the mare comes back into heat, the hormones produced transfer into the milk produced and cause diarrhea in the nursing foal. I must take exception to this philosophy. While there are those 1-in-100 or so foals that come to Last Chance that do not get diarrhea, the rest most certainly do. This “time” happens anywhere from



eight-twelve days old, averaging nine days of age for the onset of diarrhea. This is when their digestive system makes specific changes to allow for better digestion of solid foods. Foals on the mare have a distinct advantage over foals at Last Chance in that their diarrhea does not seem to last as long. I attribute this to stress coupled with ingesting possible bacterial junk while they explore the world with their mouths. Stress, as we know, can cause diarrhea in the strongest of grown horses. Stress can also cause ulcers. Ulcers can then, in turn, cause diarrhea. My old vet, Pete Smith, figured that around 80% of orphan foals develop ulcers and that 80% of those ulcers were caused by bacteria (a guess, but an educated one).



Thank you so much for taking the time to read what I have to say and I hope it helps you to understand what it is we do here. Thank you also for your continued support. Without you we would not be able to care for all of these innocents. In these harsh economic times rescues are being hit where it hurts the most...the ability to provide.

Always love the horses,
Always help the helpless,
Always from the bottom of my heart.

Victoria

Victoria Goss Founder / president Last Chance Corral



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