

## Preparations for the Next Breeding Season

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Although you might find it hard to believe (I do!), next breeding season is already around the corner. Some foals will already be born in the warmer states by the time you read this. Some mares might already be in foal again.

Some of you are lucky enough to live close to the approved stallion of your choice. Others will have to depend on shipped semen. Some of the following suggestions might help you in the coming season to make things go as smoothly as possible using shipped semen.

### Preparations:

- Make sure you have signed a breeding contract and send it back well before ordering semen. Make careful notes about deadlines for ordering semen, who to call and the end of breeding season. Pay deposits where necessary.
- Inquire with the stallion owner or manager about the possibilities of shipping during Sundays and holidays so you won't have unpleasant surprises.
- If you need to have semen shipped airport to airport, the stallion station will have to know which airlines serve your local airport. Make sure you can provide that information.
- Make sure your mare has a clean 'bill of health'. Many veterinarians recommend culturing your mare to make sure she's clean and able to conceive. This is extremely important in case your mare did not get in foal in the past season or if she had a retained placenta after her foal was born.

### Ordering semen

- Call the stallion owner when your mare comes into heat and you expect to order semen within a few days. This makes it easier to plan shows, exhibitions, training etc. for the stallion.
- Make sure you know the preferences of the stallion station about deadlines for ordering semen and try to arrange for your vet to come before that time. (maybe even the night before, if you have to order early)
- Try to call the stallion station **in time**. It takes time to prepare for collecting a stallion: the semen has to be handled carefully and not rushed; FedEx or UPS pick-up or drop off needs to be scheduled; paper work needs to be filled out for transport. Stallions are individuals, some take longer to collect than others and especially when more stallions are at one station, or also do live cover, a schedule needs to be made early in the day.

### The day of transport

- Try to have an appointment with your vet to come to inseminate your mare as close to the ETA of the semen as possible. If your vet can't come right away to inseminate, turn the entire equitainer upside down **slowly** about every three hours to prevent the semen from clogging on the bottom, which is not good for the motility. You can do the same if you have to keep one dose for the next day.
- If you have to pick up a shipment from the airport it is wise to call the airport or airline and inquire about delays. This might prevent you from sitting at an airport for hours. Make sure you know the airbill number of the shipment when you pick it up. Often that won't help you because at many airlines these are not processed until after the flights have arrived, but many airline employees will ask for it if there is a problem.
- You can find out the guaranteed delivery time for the parcel services (1-800-PICK-UPS or 1-800-GO-FEDEX). Also inquire about the nearest pick-up location. Pick-ups are usually available around 9am, so sometimes it pays to go and pick up the semen instead of having it delivered. (Your nearest pick-up location is not always the same as the station that is serving your area!) If your UPS or FedEx shipment is delivered after the guaranteed delivery time it might be possible to get the transport costs back. Tell the stallion station if there have been any problems.

### After breeding

- Have your vet check the mare for ovulation (even if a mare has had a shot to ovulate it doesn't always mean she did) and again remember that deadline for ordering, just in case you'll have to order semen again!
- Ask the vet to make notes about your mare so you can compare them from cycle to cycle and from year to year. Also keep notes yourself about the start of heat and the duration and the behavior of the mare.
- Send the shipping container back as soon as you don't need it anymore; another breeder might depend on it. Make sure everything that came out of it is put back in (except for baggies and rubber bands). Insure the big containers, and keep your shipping receipt in case you need to track your shipment.
- If there have been problems with the shipment, don't complain to others, but contact the stallion station and discuss the situation. Good luck this coming breeding season!