



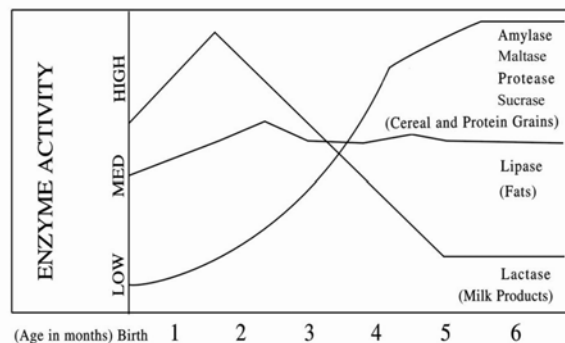
Early Foal Management and Feeding

Progressive Nutrition's Management Guide # 103

Every foal's first four months of age is a time for rapid growth and digestive changes, and a time when nutrition plays a critical role in skeletal development. To achieve each foal's genetic potential, you must provide feed to complement their changing digestive system in a form they can absorb and meet their nutrient needs in proteins (amino acids), fats (fatty acids), calories, major & trace minerals and vitamins.

A common management practice in the past has been to allow nursing foals to eat with their dams. Unfortunately, the foal under two months of age has little ability to digest cereal grains. During the foal's first three months of life, their digestive enzymes are more efficient at breaking down and absorbing milk than the starch found in cereal grains (Fig. 1). As the foal ages, their digestive enzymes also change. When the foal is between 3 and 4 months of age, amylase surpasses lactase allowing them to digest cereal grains and their starches. **Foals First® Starter & Creep** supplies a combination of milk based ingredients with heat processed (cooked) protein and cereal grains to properly match their changing digestive system, resulting in maximum nutrient absorption, while reducing the chance of digestive upset, i.e.. colic and diarrhea.

(Fig. 1) Digestive Enzyme Activity of the Young Growing Horse



Kapper, DR, Applied Nutrition, ed. Reed, SM, Equine Internal Medicine, 2nd Edition, Saunders, St. Louis, MO 2004, pp 1565.

As foals grow and develop, they may start showing signs of Developmental Orthopedic Disease, (D.O.D) such as epiphysitis (physisitis) and acquired contracted tendons. To determine the cause and ultimate solution to this problem, you must evaluate their: 1) nutrition, 2) genetics and 3) environmental factors. To assure that nutrition is not the limiting factor, prompt attention must be paid to every ingredient, and its nutrient content, in their diet. If you determine that nutrition has played a role, immediate attention to the dietary balance will speed recovery. Nutritional shortages can

develop from the decline in the mineral density in mare's milk. If this is the reason, the foal will begin to show signs of DOD between 2 to 4 months of age. **Foals First® Starter & Creep** will help offset these problems by complementing the nutrients found in mares' milk by supplying their needed major & trace minerals and vitamins, such as: calcium, phosphorus, copper, zinc, selenium and Vitamin E.

Nursing Foal Management

- All nursing foals should have access to free choice **Foals First® Starter & Creep** and we would like them to consume approximately 1-lb/100 lbs of body weight/day.

- To help assure adequate consumption of **Foals First® Starter & Creep**: 1) offer a creep feeder for the foal during their first week of age; 2) find a way to limit the foals' access to the mare's grain mixture, which they have difficulty digesting and is formulated to complement forages. If the foal eats the mare's grain mixture first, it may be difficult to get them to eat from their own creep feeder. One of the simplest ways to do this is to raise the mare's bucket or feed trough high enough so the foal cannot reach it for the first few months of age.

- The quantity of milk the mare produces/day will affect the amount of **Foals First® Starter & Creep** the foal consumes/day. If the mare is a good milker, the foal will not be hungry and will show no interest in eating extra food.

- If the foal is not eating **Foals First® Starter & Creep**, and begins to show signs of a developmental problem, start providing **Rejuvenaide™** every day. **Rejuvenaide™** is an oral drench that can add the vitamins and trace minerals needed for growing horses that are not consuming adequate amounts of **Foals First Starter & Creep** (pellet or texturized) feed. Supply the foal with 5 cc/100 lbs of body weight of the **Rejuvenaide™ Liquid, or Powder in solution**, or 2 cc/100 lbs of the **Rejuvenaide™ Paste**, until the foal is eating 1-lb/100 lbs of body weight/day of **Foals First® Starter & Creep**.

- By 4 months of age, the foal has developed the ability to digest cereal grains, and therefore can be started on a weanling diet. Select a grain mixture for weanlings that: 1) will complement the forage: type and maturity level (RFV) the foal is eating and 2) will supply adequate nutrients to support optimal growth.

By following the **Progressive Nutrition Foals First® feeding program** you can match the changes in the growing foals digestive system the way nature intended. The **Foals First® feeding program** will deliver the proper skeletal development and lean muscle mass that you demand, resulting in the success you desire!