To that end, SallyAnne Ness, DVM, Dipl. ACVIM, reviewed how to perform CPR on newborn foals at the 2015 American Association of Equine Practitioners' Convention, held Dec. 5 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Ness is an internal medicine specialist at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, New York.

Ness explained that foals born with beating heart and pulse, but who fail to breathe, can be revived via cardiopulmonary resuscitation (more commonly known as CPR). And there's more good news: Both owners and veterinarians can perform CPR on a foal in need. The key is to be prepared in advance and not to wait until it's too late to learn this potentially life-saving skill.

Handling Foals Without a Heartbeat

When the Foal Arrives

Begin administering chest compressions immediately to any foal born not breathing and without a heartbeat. These foals should be monitored closely for relapse. A foal may appear dead for 15 minutes but may still breathe on his own if his heart is beating. If a foal fails to respond after 15 minutes, success is unlikely. The goal should be to establish a heart rate of 60 beats per minute or greater. If the foal responds, he should still be monitored closely for relapse.

Ness recommended continuing CPR until the foal is breathing on his own and has a heart rate over 60 beats per minute. She said the compressor doesn't need to stop. If he's not intubated, the compressor should stop every four minutes to aid in revival, she said. Additionally, veterinarians can administer epinephrine to help get an appropriate compression rhythm. She recommended beginning chest compressions immediately. The veterinarian should maintain a third with each compressions. Ness noted that an easy way to get an appropriate compression rhythm is by mentally singing Stayin' Alive by the Bee Gees and by Queen has a

When to Stop

When to stop CPR for foals depends on the circumstances. If the foal has breathing and a heart rate of 60 to 80 beats per minute, third

Aims for resuscitation when a foal's heart rate gets too low or stops beating

Regardless of which option the veterinarian or attendant uses, Ness said the goal is to apply 10 breaths per minute, holding the first inspiration for three to five seconds and then using quick, short breaths. This last option is probably the easiest and safest choice for foaling attendants and

She recommended having the foaling team take turns performing compressions in two

Poking the muzzle and nostrils with straw can also incite a reflex that prompts the foal to take a

Another non-intubated option is a mask with a

She suggested giving several people specific jobs

Noting that the foal's heart rate is critical to the foal's outcome, the veterinarian should assess the foal's heart rate and breathing at least every minute. The foal's heart rate should be 60 to 80 beats per minute, with 30 to 40 breaths per minute and pulse should be 60 to 80 beats per minute, she said;

Identifying any rib fractures and/or congenital deficits;

Palpating for pulses; and

Looking at the foal's teeth and gums to check for

Ness recommended

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