Managing Foal Rejection

The past six years have been a busy one for veterinarian John Scoggin, who has managed eight cases of foal rejection out of nearly 700 mares bred at Claiborne Farm in Paris, Kentucky. Scoggin, who is the resident veterinarian at the farm, has used a variety of techniques to successfully manage foal rejection cases.

Nurse Mares

Scoggin noted that nurse mares are an excellent option if they're available. However, he also added that using a surrogate is a better option than raising the orphan foal by hand, as the former is more likely to produce better results. He explained that this is because the surrogate mare is more likely to accept the foal and provide the necessary care.

Behavior Modification

In cases where nurse mares are not available, Scoggin described the use of behavior modification techniques to teach the mare to accept her foal. He explained that this can involve physical restraint, tranquilizers, or a combination of the two. He also noted that some mares are better mothers than others, and that the decision of how to approach the situation will depend on the individual mare.

Managing Physical Restraint

If physical restraint fails, veterinarians have several pharmaceutical options available to them. Scoggin described the use of a padded barricade with a removable panel as one effective technique. He also noted that the use of a lip chain or twitch can give the mare a distraction and prevent her from attacking the foal.

Removing Mares

In some cases, removing the mare from the foal can be necessary. Scoggin explained that this can be done in several ways, including removing the mare from her normal environment, previous foal rejection, or the amount of pressure on the mare more easily than a twitch.

Managing Rejected Foals

When triaging a foal rejection, it's important to keep all horses and humans as safe as possible. Scoggin emphasized the importance of being attentive to and accepting of the foal, and noted that some mares are just better mothers than others. He also stressed that all physical restraint methods are only temporary solutions to the problem.

Conclusion

Managing foal rejection can be a challenging task, but with the right approach, it's possible to successfully manage the situation. Scoggin's experience and expertise have allowed him to develop a variety of effective techniques that can be used to manage foal rejection cases. With the right planning and preparation, it's possible to ensure the safety and welfare of both the mare and the foal.