

RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE INCIDENCE AND OUTCOME OF DYSTOCIA IN 601 STANDARD BRED MARES FOALINGS

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The incidence of dystocia is low in mares, but difficult foaling is life threatening for both dam and foetus, and requires veterinary emergency care (Vandeplasse, 1993). The aim of this study was to retrospectively analyse the incidence and the outcome of dystocia in 601 foalings in Standardbred mares. The study was done in a single breeding station offering the foaling control service and evaluated the years 2008-2013. Near term mares were maintained in paddocks during the day and in foaling boxes during the night, where they were monitored continuously by direct or camera observation. An experienced technician was trained to call the veterinarian in case of any obstacle to the normal prosecution of foaling and to prevent as much as possible excessive mare's expulsive contraction, forcing the mare to walk, until the veterinarian intervention. Dystocias were treated by the common obstetrical practices for controlled vaginal delivery, starting within 60 minutes from the call. In four occasions it was necessary to submit mares to general anaesthesia and in two cases to fetotomy. Dystocia occurred in 16/601 parturition (2.7%) with 9 and 5 cases of longitudinal anterior or posterior presentation, respectively, and 2 cases of sitting dog posture. In anterior presentation, dystocia was due to malposture of foetal extremities (n=7), dorsopubic position (n=1) and weak maternal contractions (n=1). In posterior presentation, dystocia was not complicated by abnormalities of position and/or posture. The incidence of dystocia was not influenced by the year of the study, the age or the parity of mares. Six/16 foals died (37.5%), in all cases before the veterinary intervention. Two/9 (22.2%), 2/5 (40%) and 2/2 (100%) foals died in occasion of anterior, posterior and sitting dog presentations, respectively. One/16 mares died (6.2%) as consequence of a sitting dog posture. Dystocia was reported in 4% (Thoroughbred and Standardbred), 8% (Shetland Ponies) and 10% (Belgian Draft Horses) of cases, with a higher incidence in primiparous than in multiparous mares (Vandeplasse, 1993). An increase in foetal death was reported with a delay of delivery

beyond 40 minutes after the rupture of chorioallantoic membrane (McCue and Ferris, 2012). After fetotomy, a 95.8% of mares survival rate was reported (Carluccio et al., 2007). The incidence of dystocia observed in this study was low, probably because observation was limited to Standardbred mares submitted to a strict control of the peripartum period. In this study, the intervention of the veterinarian within one hour from the call was able to rescue all the foals still alive at his arrival and 15/16 mares.

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