



MASTITIS IN MARES

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Mastitis, or inflammation of the mammary gland is much more common in dairy cows than in mares. A majority of equine cases occur within 1 to 2 months after a mare has weaned her foal. However, mastitis may occur in mares of any age or reproductive status. Clinical signs associated with mastitis include a warm, swollen or painful udder, accumulation of edema or tissue fluid on the abdomen in front of the mammary gland and possibly a fever.

It is usually not difficult to confirm the presence of a mammary gland infection. A sample of the mammary gland fluid may be examined microscopically to determine if significant inflammation is present. In addition, a culture of the fluid expressed from the affected mammary gland will usually reveal the cause. In most instances it is a bacterial infection. However, determination of the best antibiotic to eliminate the bacteria may require what is called a sensitivity test.

Treatment of mastitis in a mare usually involves frequent hand milking to remove inflammatory cells, fluid and bacteria. Oral or injectable antibiotics that are effective against the particular type of bacteria cultured from the milk are commonly recommended. Infusion of a commercially available mastitis preparation (usually marketed for cattle) directly into the infected

mammary gland may also be warranted. Finally, most affected mares should receive medications to decrease the pain, swelling and fever.

The prognosis for a full recovery from mastitis in the mare is excellent. Although it is possible that a mare could develop mastitis a second time, the chances are low. Finally, not all cases of enlarged mammary glands in mares are due to mastitis. Accumulation of fluid in the mammary gland of older mares, called pseudolactation or false lactation, is one symptom of equine Cushing's disease. Edema near the mammary gland may also be a symptom of other conditions, such as a viral infection, liver disease, immune disorders or other problems.