

and parturition, and therefore demanding more careful supervision on the part of the breeder.

SIGNS OF PREGNANCY

Of course, it is taken for granted that before any trouble is expended in the adoption of unusual precautionary measures it is ascertained that the mare is really in foal; for I have known instances in which animals have exhibited one or two signs which their owners or attendants have accepted as evidence of pregnancy, and consequently, have nursed the mares for months in the expectation of eventually seeing an addition to the enquire family, but at last had to confess to having made a mistake. This is not pleasant, and an endeavour should therefore be made to make certain of the existence of pregnancy. In the great majority of cases this cannot be satisfactorily ascertained before the sixth or seventh month, by the ordinary observer, though there are certain indications before that period which might lead to the supposition that such is the condition of the mare. It is usually the practice to present mares to the horse in about nine days after they have foaled, this being the period when such presentation is likely to have the desired result; at the end of a fortnight they are again presented, and generally in another fortnight a last trial is made, when, if they refuse, it is considered as conclusive that conception has taken place, especially if no unfavourable signs have been manifested in the interval. Soon after this time many mares show a change in their manner, and become more tranquil and rather torpid, though in somewhat rare instances they appear to be "in heat," and otherwise act as if they were not pregnant. But about the period I have mentioned, the movements of the foetus can nearly always be observed towards the right flank, especially when the mare has just drunk a quantity of cold water. An expert can tell earlier if a foetus be present by manual examination through the rectum or vagina, auscultation, and a kind of percussion (*ballotement*, as the French term it); but the amateur is not sufficiently skilled to practise these.

CARE OF MARES DURING PREGNANCY

If the mare is worked when pregnant, the labour should not be so fast, and it should be gentler and more uniform; violent paces, or irregular and severe efforts are dangerous, especially towards the end of pregnancy, and within a week or two

of foaling all work should be suspended. With careful handling, farm mares may be subjected to light, steady labour until within a few days of parturition. Exercise is good, and indeed necessary for all breeds of mares in this condition. If allowed to run out of doors this should be on a thoroughly dry soil, as a strong, wet soil is not without danger. The paddock, or run, should also be free from open drains or ditches, and as level as possible. Mares in foal, and particularly when near foaling, like to indulge themselves more than usual in lying down and rolling, and if there are hollow places or ditches they may roll over on their back into one of these, when, in their struggles to get up they may sustain serious injury which will probably lead to abortion, or premature birth. Smooth, level ground, however, is not good for foals and young stock, as it makes them caseless and clumsy in their action. Broken, undulating ground is much to be preferred. All the fences enclosing the run of the mare in foal ought to be free from gaps and stakes projecting inwards, and all doors and gates through which she may have to pass should be amply wide to prevent her getting jammed; and she must not be pastured with young horses or cattle, nor exposed to great excitement. The same care should be exercised if the mare is stabled; she must be guarded from annoyance or injury by other horses, and if kept in a stall this ought to be sufficiently wide to allow her to turn round easily in it; the floor should be nearly horizontal, so that the weight of the abdominal contents may not be thrown too much backwards, while she must be secured in such a manner that there will be no risk of her being "cast."

But it is always judicious to place the mare about to foal in a convenient loose box or temporary shed, where there is plenty of room for her to move about, with security against bad weather, freedom from draught or cold air, and good ventilation. For litter there is, perhaps, nothing better than straw, but when parturition is near this should not be new, as some mares have a semi-morbid appetite at this time, and would consume it greedily, thereby producing distention and dangerous pressure on the uterus and its contents. It is therefore advisable to use slightly soiled but dry litter that has been under other horses; this should be soft and short, so that the mare's feet may not get entrangled in it, though it may be a good depth.