

Should I Take My Mare To A Breeding Farm or Reproductive Facility?

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Mare owners and veterinarians often make the decision to transport a broodmare to the breeding farm, where the stallion is located, for breeding purposes. Often mare owners simply do not want to take on the responsibility of shipping semen to their mare. Maybe their professional careers will not allow the time needed to schedule vet exams, teasing, or taking on the whole process of fresh cooled semen transport, etc. The easiest way to provide the best alternative for their mare is shipping her straight to the stallion's farm. Some mare owners don't feel that they have the



experience necessary for the intended task of breeding their mare, and believe that their mare deserves to be in a professional environment where her breeding cycles can be closely monitored. In some instances, broodmares can also prove to be hard to handle. They are sometimes dangerous for their owners to hold while the vet is performing breeding procedures on them. It is easier to have a professional breeding team manage your broodmare's needs when this occurs.

Broodmares are also shipped to reproductive clinics, which specialize in transported semen, frozen semen, reproductive problems, and embryo transfer. At these clinics, mares can be closely monitored by veterinarians, who arrange all the breeding needs for your mare. Most times, your mare is not shipped home until she has achieved a viable pregnancy. These facilities take the stress off mare owners, who don't want to worry about the whole process of transported fresh cooled or frozen semen to the mare. Sometimes you will not want to take on the cost involved, but one successful attempt at a clinic that specializes in reproduction, is far more cost effective than 3-4 unsuccessful attempts at transported semen at your farm.

As we all know, some horses are known as "problem broodmares." Included in these are mares that repeatedly remain difficult, for whatever reasons, to get in foal. Local vets and owners are likely to send these mares to the breeding farms, where they can be close to the stallion's semen and the reproductive vet that is handling the stallion farm's breeding needs. This allows the mare's heat cycles to be strictly monitored. In some cases a broodmare's problem can be nothing more than an allergic reaction to the extenders used in fresh cooled semen when shipping. At the breeding farm, fresh semen, without extenders can be inseminated directly in the mare.

SHIPPING YOUR MARE:

- Call the breeding farm or repro facility. Ask questions about their costs, daily care, boarding fees, pasture fees, etc. If you inquire about stall board, make sure that includes daily turnout or exercise for your mare or mare/foal. Discuss what initial medical exams your mare may need.
- Ask about needed paperwork that your mare and/or mare & foal may need. Most farms require a current coggins, health certificate and vaccination records. (It is very important

that you prove that your mare's health is up to date. Breeding farms cannot take the chance of shipping an unhealthy horse in and contaminating their herd.) Sickness and disease happens easy enough with out shipping an infected mare or sick foal into a breeding farm.

- Please arrange for your mare's arrival at the breeding farm. Call ahead of time and discuss what day and time will be appropriate. Most farms require that horses be dropped off during normal business/barn hours. Do not assume that you can drive all night, arrive at 4:00 a.m., and expect a farm employee to greet you upon arrival and tell you where to put your mare! *There is nothing worse than seeing an unexpected trailer pull up the driveway. Most of the times, breeding farms need to "rearrange" paddock horses so that they will have room for your arriving mare. If your mare requires a stall and you pull in unannounced, your mare may be out of luck that day. Do not be rude. Call ahead.*
- If you are ahead of schedule while transporting your mare, call the farm. If you are going to be later than the scheduled drop off time, call the farm. Be courteous and let the farm know where you are. *We actually have professional trucking companies or truck/trailer drivers who drive on the farm with mares and they do not even know the mare's names. The mare's owners usually call and say, "Did my mare get there yet?" "Sorry, but it was a last minute thing and I didn't have time to call you." How rude is that? Believe it or not, this sort of thing goes on all the time. We also have mares come in unannounced and they want her bred that day! HELLO!*
- When a broodmare arrives on our farm, we always check the paperwork first. If they do not have paperwork, she does not get off the truck. Under certain circumstances, if the paperwork is not in order, the mare goes into a "quarantine" lot and we pull blood work and run a 1 hour coggins test. Again, please understand, we are not intentionally trying to be rude about the health of your mare, but we must protect the health of other owner's mares while at the breeding farm.
- Most farms will tag (or number) a mare's halter when arriving. This tag identifies your mare in the future. *Alliance Stud also takes digital photographs of the arriving mare for identification and for arrival weight and condition. We also write down all markings on a "New Arrivals" form sheet. Other things included on the sheet are contact information; emergency contact number; insurance provider; age; medical problems; and medicines, if any. We also make reference to items that are shipped in with the mare, including halter; blankets; leg wraps; cribbing straps; special feeds; and medicine; etc. All of this information speeds up departure and gives us the needed background on your broodmare.*
- Send any needed medicines with your mare. Do not assume that the breeding farm will have your mare's medicines on hand. Plan ahead and send them with her. It could be days before the farm could order the drugs or you could get them sent.
- Send all previous medical history with your mare or mail it to the breeding farm ahead of time. Copy the information. *Do not send the originals.* Things get lost in the shuffle and you need to keep the original for your personal files. Don't think that the truck driver is automatically going to take the time to make sure that the paperwork gets into the proper employee hands. Thus, making copies is important. Also, most breeding farms want to keep copies of this information in with your mare's permanent breeding records.
- Let the breeding farm know to what extent you are prepared to go when it comes to getting your mare in foal. If you are on a fixed budget, let them know, that way if your

mare proves to be a problem, they can let you know if the cost involved in breeding is getting too high. Most farms will take every precaution to keep your costs at a minimal. You do have to understand that farm expenses and vet fees have to be covered. We cannot do your work for free.

- Accidents and sickness occur. Horses always seem to find a way to try to commit suicide. *At least the good ones!* If your mare is at a reputable facility, every effort will be made to keep her (and her foal) safe. Mishaps do occur. If an accident or sickness occurs, let the farm explain what happened and please try to remain calm. The breeding farm will get the needed medical attention needed for your horse. Make sure the farm has your emergency contact number. Sometimes things go wrong in the middle of the night and we may need to contact you. Otherwise, we will always go forward and make the best medical decision possible- according to the crisis at hand. And remember, no one plans on colic surgery or broken legs, but it all comes with horse ownership! Be prepared by giving the farm all the needed information for your mare.
- Your mare is not the only mare at the breeding farm. Please be considerate of the fact that most farms/ clinics are dealing with large sums of broodmares. It takes an incredible amount of time to handle, breed, and do vet work with mares on a daily basis. Therefore, do not call everyday wondering how “Bessie” is doing. *If we take the time to call all mare owners every day, we would not have the time to breed your mares, or perform the needed daily tasks on them. Please be patient and let the breeding farm contact you. Farm management understands your need to be connected to your mare, but it is just not possible to have constant contact with mare owners. We always say, “We will contact you when your mare gets in foal, otherwise, no news is good news.” We also mail out postcards with updates on them. If your mare is in foal, we also send an ultrasound photo to you. E-mail is also another great way to keep track of your mare’s progress. It can be read after normal hours, when farm employees can reply at a convenient time with updates.* Talk over an “approximate plan” before you arrive at the farm. That way you will have some kind of an idea of the time and procedures that will be preformed on your mare.
- Breeding farms and/or vet clinics should contact you if your mare needs extensive vet work done. Approx. costs should be given to you prior to treatments.
- Daily teasing should be included in your mare care.
- Ultrasounds and/or palpations should be done to ensure proper follicular growth. This information will further prepare your mare for a successful breeding.
- Ovulation drugs will often be used to help your mare release her egg. They include: HCG; Ovuplant; and Injectable Deslorelin.
- After breeding, your mare can be checked by ultrasound 14-16 days post ovulation. At this time, the veterinarian will determine if a viable pregnancy has occurred.
- If your mare is not in foal, she will be re-cycled for another heat. If the veterinarian has any concerns about breeding again, they should contact you at this time. Many variables go into breeding heat cycles.
- If your mare is in foal, possible blood tests may be preformed to determine if your mare needs to be supplemented with hormones to help maintain pregnancy. Your vet will let you know if your mare needs the appropriate drugs such as Regu-Mate and Progesterone.
- Request an ultrasound photo of your mare’s pregnancy. It is good to have for your breeding records and it also guarantees the fact that your mare is in foal. *(Hopefully the*

*ultrasound photo was taken of YOUR mare!) ***Some mares have come to our farm and their owners have told us that they were getting in foal, when in fact a uterine cyst was being mistaken for an embryo.*

- You and the breeding farm will determine an approximate pick up schedule for your mare, after she is pronounced in foal. This time will vary depending on the mare and her past history. Your vet or farm manager will discuss this with you and any further departure questions will be answered at that time.
- Departure: When it is time to pick up your mare, make sure you get all health records back. (Coggins, health records, etc.) Make sure that the breeding farm or repro clinic sends any needed medicines with your mare on the day of departure. Drug administering directions should also be included with your mare's medicines.
- After your mare goes home, stay up with her vaccinations. Your local vet will help you with this. Let him/her know of her last breeding dates so that they will give you the appropriate vaccinations at the needed times. Also, have your mare periodically checked for pregnancy. Don't assume that at approx. 344 post breeding that your mare will produce a healthy foal. Use your head and stay up on your mare's needs. And don't forget about nutritional needs!

Hopefully everything will go as planned and you will enjoy success with your broodmare after shipping her out. The main goal is to achieve pregnancy. If your mare does not become pregnant within a normal time limit, the reproductive veterinarian will give you all options at that time. He/she may also suggest surgical procedures such as: uterine scoping; uterine cyst removal; oviduct surgery, embryo transfer, etc. You can then decide what is best for you and your mare. It is a must to work with qualified personnel. This will give you a good breeding experience and your mare will come home safe in foal.