



Artificial Lighting for Mares

A mare's natural fertile period is April thru October however; it peaks between May and June. Mother Nature designed it this way to prevent mares from foaling during the cold winter months. When the daylight increases in early spring, the mare's cycle enters a transition period. Their ovaries return to cyclic activity by producing eggs or follicles. During this time follicles may not always ovulate due to low levels of the luteinizing hormone and their receptivity may be prolonged between 15- 60 days or may result in "split heats".

For show purposes and convenience, some owners prefer to have the breeding season begin in January. In order to change their fertile period, research suggests extending the day length to 14-16 hours. The use of artificial lighting induces an earlier onset of ovarian activity when a breed-able follicle forms and ovulates.

CVS recommends starting the light therapy by November 15th. To calculate the light hours, start at sunrise and add 16. If sunrise is at 6am, they will require daylight and artificial lighting until 10pm. Mares must consistently be exposed to 10 -12 foot candles of light at eye level. A 200 watt incandescent bulb centered in a 12 x 12 stall will generally give adequate illumination. Use a timer to turn the lights on and off automatically. An interruption or discontinued use of artificial lighting may cause the mare to regress back to a non-cycling state.

The increased light hours signals the mare to grow a thin summer hair coat that may require blanketing when turned out. If your mare is already pregnant, the increase of daylight hours may shorten her gestation period. The foal may be born with a thin hair coat and also may require blanketing.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call **CVS**