Late term twin pregnancy management in a Thoroughbred mare
Large Animal Clinical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Late term twin pregnancy in mares is undesirable due to poor fetal/neonatal survival and high risk of periparturient complications.1 Most third trimester twin pregnancies are spontaneously aborted.2,3

A 15-year-old Thoroughbred mare was presented at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine at day 250 of gestation for precocious mammary development and suspected fetal death. Examination of the mare revealed an enlarged mammary gland and an elongated vulva. Transrectal examination of the reproductive tract revealed abnormal presentation of fetal membranes suggesting placental compromise. Transabdominal ultrasound examination revealed one viable and one non-viable fetus of similar sizes. Pregnancy termination was initiated due to the risk for premature delivery and/or dystocia. Parturition was induced using low dose (5 IU) oxytocin. Both fetuses were extracted manually after intramuscular injection of oxytocin. The first fetus was delivered dead and the second was euthanized. The mare spontaneously passed both placentas. The mare was examined daily by transrectal ultrasound to assess uterine involution. The mare was treated every six hours with intramuscular injections of oxytocin to aid in uterine contraction. Uterine lavage was performed daily for three days and effluent was within normal limits. Pentoxiphylline, flunixin meglumine, trimethoprim sulfa and light exercise were prescribed. She was discharged three days after the abortion, and did well after discharge.

Rarely, early detection methods (including transrectal ultrasonography) miss twin pregnancies. Early intervention techniques (manual reduction, fetal reductions) reliably result in delivery of a single foal.4 Late gestational twin pregnancies frequently result in abortion due to the epitheliochorial type of placentation.5 Twins that survive late into gestation are at high risk of premature delivery and dystocia.2 Live born twins are often dysmature and small, with a high rate of mortality.5 Given the inherent risks, cost and chance of survival of one foal, termination of the pregnancy is often performed.

References