

ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

This information sheet aims to answer some of the commonly asked questions regarding artificial insemination (AI), if you have any further questions then please contact our team in the office.

Why should I choose to do AI with my mare?

- Lower risk of disease transmission
- Lower risk to both mare and stallion of injury than during natural cover
- Excellent first cycle pregnancy rates

What are the benefits of AI?

- Huge stallion choice- many stallions are available for AI
- Semen transport- semen can be shipped globally both chilled and frozen
- Cleaner- small volume of filtered semen introduced into mare
- Healthy and safety benefits for mare, stallion and handlers
- Less risk of disease transmission
- Can work with the mare from home

What are the disadvantages of AI?

- Can be more expensive than natural cover

What is the cost of AI?

- Package prices vary hugely and always worth asking what a 'package' includes
- At Equibreed UK a fresh/chilled package is £..... (excl VAT) and £.... (excl VAT) for frozen
- Some places charge an 'in foal fee' once the mare is scanned pregnant

What does AI with chilled semen involve?

- The mare is monitored to assess development of a follicle (which contains the egg)
- Once a follicle is of correct size and dominance, semen is ordered
- An ovulatory drug is given to encourage the mare to ovulate within 48hrs
- Semen typically arrives the following day (if sent chilled overnight) and mare inseminated
- The mare should have ovulated by the following day
- Any post ovulation treatment necessary is given

What does AI with frozen semen involve?

- Semen is usually sent to the clinic prior to starting work with mare, and kept in storage
- The mare is monitored to assess follicular development
- Once a follicle of correct size and dominance she is given an ovulatory drug- often around 9pm in the evening.
- She is rechecked the following day to ensure follicle progressing normally
- 6am following day she is rechecked, and then scanned every 1-2hrs
- Insemination is performed as close to ovulation as possible
- Frozen semen only lives for 6hrs once it is thawed
- Post ovulation treatment is given as necessary- higher likelihood of being necessary due to irritation from cryoprotectants used to freeze semen.

What are the major differences between using chilled vs. frozen semen?

- Higher cost with frozen semen due to significantly more intensive work needed to achieve a pregnant.
- Lower per cycle pregnancy rates with frozen semen- on average, despite everyone's best efforts.
- Different nomination costs- frozen semen is sometimes sold per dose, with no guarantees of pregnancy.
- Frozen semen provokes more of an inflammatory reaction in the uterus of the mare. Hence is not recommended for old mares, or mares that have a problem with fluid clearing from the uterus.

- Frozen semen only lasts 6hrs once thawed, whilst fresh/chilled semen lasts 48hrs once it has been collected.
- Check the quality of any frozen semen that you are looking to buy

I'D LIKE TO GO AHEAD, WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP?

I would like to AI my mare and work with her at home. Where do I go from here?

- First book your mare in with our Office. They will take down both your and her details, and put it onto our system. If you have any questions, you will also be able to speak to a vet. They will send you the 'Mare Booking Form' to be filled in, along with an invoice for the deposit.
- Swabs and bloods then need to be carried out to ensure that she is clear from infectious disease. Call the office to book a visit, and the samples can be taken (ideally not on a Friday due to laboratory working hours)
- Once the blood and swab results come back negative, the next step is to organize a scan to see where she is in her cycle
- From there, the vet will be able to give you a rough idea of timing of the following steps. We usually give PG to mares for chilled semen on a Weds or Thurs, so as to avoid having difficulties over a weekend with semen orders.
- Please ensure there is always someone present to hold the mare during scans, make sure there is sufficient shelter and facilities to restrain the mare, provide cover from the rain, and clean water and electricity.
- **Mares that are due to be inseminated with frozen semen are unable to be worked from home.**

I would like to AI my mare and would like to bring her to the Equibreed facility. Where do I go from here?

- First book your mare in with our Office. They will take down both your and her details, and put it onto our system. If you have any questions, you will also be able to speak to a vet. They will send you the 'Mare Booking Form' to be filled in, along with an invoice for the deposit.
- Swabs and bloods then need to be carried out to ensure that she is clear from infectious disease. Call the office to book a visit, and the samples can be taken (ideally not on a Friday due to laboratory working hours)
- Once the blood and swab results come back negative, the next step is to organize to bring her to the clinic. Call the office to organize an arrival time.

Understanding Difficulties & Risks

Are there any risks associated with AI?

The only risks are involved in the rectal examination (scan) that is done to monitor when the mare needs to be inseminated. It is a small risk- the majority of scans are performed with no complications, and our vets are highly experienced in the field. In order to reduce the risks, we ask that there is always someone competent and attentive holding the mare, and ideally in a crush or set of stocks. Occasionally we will sedate the mare for her safety and our own.

Stallion Not Available

Timing is critical, and hence during public holidays/competitions/other situations the stallion may not be available, or may not be available fresh/chilled as originally thought. It is worth having a back up if this is the case.

Lack of paperwork

No paperwork arrives in with the semen that has been sent- if the semen has been sent from abroad it is imperative that it arrives with the correct health papers. Due to the unknown origin and situation with the semen, it is unable to be inseminated.

Non-Arrival of Semen

The semen does not arrive on time- delivery companies often will not take responsibility for incurred costs, and will not provide a guarantee. We do everything we can to ensure the semen arrives on time.

Loss of Semen

The semen is lost by the delivery company- it can be worth insuring the semen in order to guard against any financial loss.

Poor Quality Semen

The semen that arrives is in poor condition- we always check the movement of the sperm before inseminating the mare. If there is little or no movement, we will advise as to whether it is worth inseminating or not.

Non-Performance by Stallion

The stallion is unable to be collected- stallions sometimes are unwilling to perform! Usually fairly uncommon, we are unable to guarantee collection either in a stallion that we are collecting from, or a stallion whose semen we have ordered from another centre.

Poor Cyclity from Mare

The mare does not cycle as expected- we do our best to predict the mares cycle, but sometimes they do not respond as expected to a drug or over time.

We do not take responsibility for poor quality semen, non-arrival of the semen, lack of health papers, delivery issues, non-performance of the stallion, lack of availability of the stallion, or any other issue arising which may cause extra cost or difficulty, and all extra costs are borne by the mare owner. We will do our best to advise owners of the situation prior to extra costs incurring, but due to the nature of the situations and time critical factors, sometimes decisions have to be made if an owner is not contactable.

AI MYTH BUSTING

Is it true that there is a 'glow of pregnancy'?

Yes- a mare's coat is often more shiny once she is pregnant

My mare urinated immediately after being inseminated. Does this mean that all of the semen is now on the floor?

No- the semen is inseminated directly through the cervix and into the uterus. Even if the mare urinates and strains after being inseminated, the semen will be prevented from leaving by the barrier of the cervix.

Washing the mare out the day after insemination removes all the semen.

Not true- it takes 6-8hours for all the live, motile sperm to reach the oviduct, hence by the following day, the only ones that are left in the uterus are those that are dead or dysfunctional.

Uterine lavage helps remove dead cells, bacteria, and assists the mare with cleaning up the uterine environment.

Inseminating further ahead of ovulation gives a higher likelihood of getting a female offspring.

Not determined! Although frequently believe to be true, there is no statistical evidence to show that this is the case.

