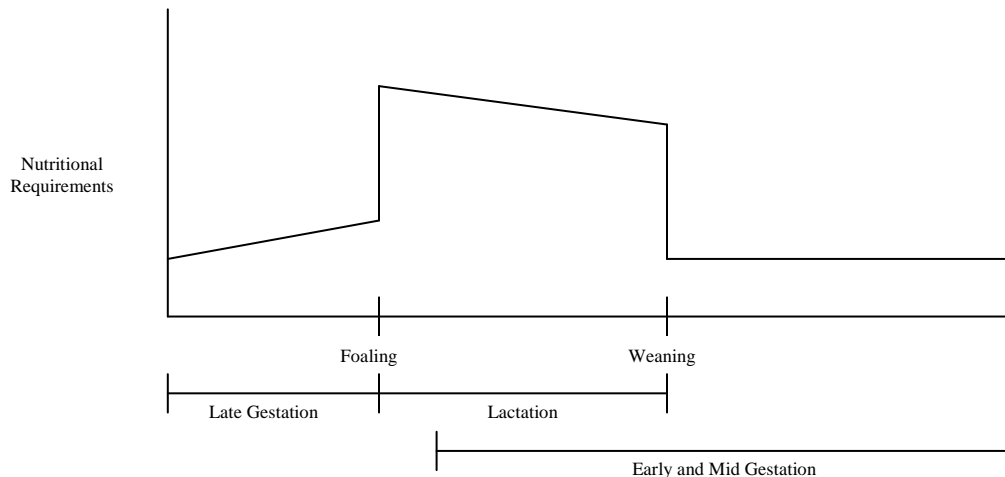


Feeding Broodmares

Broodmares represent a substantial investment in many horse operations and, generally, a lot is asked of these females. They are expected to carry and raise a foal, conceive, and maintain themselves each year, rain or shine! Considering all this, it shouldn't be surprising that only 55 to 60% of mares bred each year in the US produce a live foal. However, sound nutritional management will go a long way in helping assure a successful broodmare program.

Below is a schematic representation of the broodmare's nutritional requirements during the different stages of production.



The highest nutritional requirements coincide with foaling, when milk production begins. In the first two months of lactation, broodmares will generally produce milk equivalent to 3 to 4% of their body weight daily. During lactation, broodmares should be fed the best forage available and a sufficient quantity of concentrate feed designed for lactating broodmares.

As lactation continues, milk production decreases and there is a corresponding decline in the broodmare's nutritional requirements. The foal's consumption of dry feed also increases during this time, as weaning approaches.

Once the foal is weaned, the broodmare's nutritional requirements remain at a lower plane throughout early and mid gestation. In the last three months of gestation, requirements begin to increase in response to growth of the developing foal.

A body condition score of 6 to 7 (1 to 9 scale) is ideal for broodmares. This level of condition will support optimal milk production during lactation and reproductive efficiency during the breeding season. When this level of body condition is achieved, the feeding program should be adjusted as necessary throughout the year to maintain this level of condition.