**Day in the Life of a Foal Sitter**

Before your shift, please call 610-444-5800, introduce yourself as a foal sitter, and ask if you are needed for your shift. In the case that we do not have any mares or foals in the NICU who need assistance, we may let you know that you are not needed for that shift. We will ask if you could leave your phone number in case a new case comes in.

When you arrive, please park anywhere in the large lot to the right, and not the visitor parking lot. Please walk to the front desk, sign in, and take a volunteer name badge (new step this year). Walk up to the NICU, change your shoes as you enter the building, and change into scrubs. You are welcome to place food in the fridge upstairs in the kitchenette, and you can use a locker for your other belongings – you will just need to bring your own lock. You can take a closed lid water bottle into the nursing station if you would like to keep a beverage close. You should have a pen with you, and are encouraged to bring a book in case you are sitting with a quiet foal.

Your day will start by touching base with the nurse or PCT (patient care technician) in the NICU, and they should direct you to the foal sitter who you will be relieving, or direct you to the patient(s) you will be helping with. Someone will let you know about the case, and what the foal’s special needs are. You may get direction throughout the day from nurses, PCTs, clinicians (veterinarians), and vet students.

If you are sitting with a sick foal on a mattress, you are likely to have two scenarios. #1 a foal who wants to get up, is very active, and mentally appropriate BUT that we do not want to stand because of prematurity. #2 being a comatose foal who is recovering from a point in his life where his brain was deprived of oxygen, leading to seizures, and not mentally appropriate. The latter foal may require a little more care in the form of keeping clean and dry (this means collecting urine, changing pee pad diapers, and cleaning up foal poop - which is a much different consistency than regular horse manure). All of our mattress foals are at least turned every 2 hours to avoid bed sores, and some of the foals may be stood for short periods of time. For the foals who tolerate oral feedings, they are fed every 2 hours, mostly by feeding tube. You may be asked to help a nurse or clinician with this process.

There are no set break times, but the staff should check in and offer you breaks. If you need to step out for a bathroom or meal break, don’t be afraid to ask someone for relief while you do so. It is very important to have someone relieve you, and not just leave a foal unattended. If you are partnered with another volunteer, you may have to tag-team and take separate breaks.

There are some cases where you will have more flexibility to move around the NICU, when observing pregnant mares for instance. On these shifts, we would love help with laundry, cleaning, sweeping, wiping down surface areas, etc. Once you are shown how to operate the washer and dryer, and learn where the cleaning equipment is, feel free to jump in whenever you have the opportunity. Even though we are hospital, we are still a barn, so things tend to get dirty and dusty.

Your relief should be arriving as you are ready to leave. Please communicate with the next foal sitter about what your shift was like, and what they should expect.

When you leave, please sign out at the front desk.

Thank you!!