



How to Collect a Milk Sample from a Mare for Nutrient Analysis

To collect a milk sample, you will need a clean, wide-mouth jar or bottle to milk into. Wash your hands and the mare's udder before you begin milking to ensure you do not contaminate the milk. Mares store very little milk in their udder, but will rapidly supply milk each time the foal nurses. Foals will drink between 7 and 10 times per hour for the first 30 days. That is why you must wait for the foal to be nursing before you try to milk the mare or you will become very frustrated because there will be no milk!

When you are ready to collect the milk sample, wait until the foal begins to drink from one side of the udder while you are ready on the opposite side of the mare with your collection jar. Put your hand in between the mare's teats to prevent the foal from drinking from the one on your side. Wait until the foal is drinking well, then moisten your thumb and forefinger and gently squeeze from the top of the teat, trapping the milk below. Then, with a gentle "striping" action, pull down and force the milk out of the two milk ducts on the bottom of the teat, directly into the bottle. After you have gathered all of the milk she has let down, wait for 5 or 10 minutes, which will be the time until the foal nurses again, then repeat the procedure until you have a minimum of 3 oz of milk in the bottle.

The milk you collect and have analyzed from your mare will be compared to the mare's milk nutrient analysis published in the "2007 NRC for Horses," according to their week after foaling. Because the nutrient density of mares' milk is constantly changing, we recommend sending a 3 oz sample into the lab for analysis on days 5, 30, 60, and 90. We will compare each of these analyses to the amount of nutrients it takes to support "optimal" growth and development of a foal, in 30-day increments.

Progressive Nutrition will provide you with "milk kits," which include a mailer, plastic bottle, and a Holmes Lab Information Chart to be completed and mailed in with the sample of milk. Please call our home office at 888-239-3185 and tell us how many kits you will need, and we will mail them to you at no charge.

Send the milk sample overnight to Holmes Laboratory. No dry ice or refrigeration will be necessary, but do not send it on a Friday. If you are going to wait to send the sample, put it into the refrigerator until ready to mail.

It will take Holmes Lab three working days after they receive the milk sample to complete the analysis. They will email the analysis to you and the Progressive Nutrition's Account Manager's name on the bottom of the Holmes Lab Information Chart, so we can discuss with you the outcome and recommendations, if needed.

