Shackleford Banks Horse Herd Update
August 22, 2008

We are appreciative when visitors report newborn foals – which is what happened with this days-old colt.

It's common for onlookers to worry that the foal is dead or cannot rise when in fact he is just sleeping soundly. Foals spend a lot of time resting. A horse may sleep on his side ("laterally") or on his breastbone ("sternally"). He can also doze while standing.

Please watch from a distance to avoid stressing the mare. Your patience will be rewarded when the foal wakes and tests his coordination as he rises to nurse. Newborns are usually wobbly, but should be able to find the udder and nurse competently.

This mare is thin by domestic horse standards but normal among wild horses. (To gauge weight, look at the top of her back ("top line"). The wide belly reflects recent foaling and a high-fiber diet but not fat.) Mares with offspring, youngsters in growth spurts, and older adults who are aging usually carry lower body weight than other wild herd members.

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Source: Cape Lookout National Seashore, Wildlife Biologist - Horses