



## Jessie and Windy—the miracle foals



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Foaling is a time of excitement for horse breeders, but sometimes situations arise when that excitement can quickly diminish.

Two horse-loving families share their challenging, foaling experiences, which left them in a fight for life with their young foals last year.

### JESSIE

Jessie, a large Belgian colt, was orphaned after his mother, Nell, ruptured a uterine artery giving birth. Left to be raised without his mother, Jessie's owners knew the key to his survival was immediate colostrum administration and proper nutrition during the first weeks of life.

Jessie's owners turned to a fellow breeder and veterinarian for help. The breeder donated colostrum from his mares to provide Jessie with the antibodies necessary to fend off early life stage diseases and keep him healthy. After consulting a veterinarian, Jessie's owners were told that a foal milk replacer to replace Nell's milk was necessary to give Jessie the proper nutrition. Mare's milk is naturally 24 percent protein and 16 percent fat, so a milk replacer that matches this is considered optimal for foals when mother can't provide for her young.

Then, the long journey of raising the orphaned colt began. A camp composed of a mixer, bowls and a microwave was set-up to prepare for the long haul and the sleepless nights it would take to help Jessie survive. He was fed milk replacer every two hours for the first week and slowly the number of feedings decreased over time. After a few months, Jessie graduated from bottles of milk replacer to milk pellets mixed with milk replacer, and then, finally to oats. Today, Jessie is a strong and healthy young colt.

### WINDY

Orphans aren't the only foals that can benefit from milk replacer. Situations may arise when a mare might not be producing enough milk or a foal may be unable to nurse from its mother. This was the scenario for Windy, a descendant of Secretariat who proved she was just as much of a champion as her great, great grandfather.

Windy, a Quarter Horse filly born prematurely, came into the world on a bitterly cold day in January at her home in California, Md. The weak foal was unable to stand or nurse from her mother and the eventual diagnosis was grim.

Attempts were made to get her standing and to suckle, but she had lost the feeling in her lips and therefore was unable to nurse. After Windy's failed attempts to nurse and dealing

with an extremely feisty mare who did not really want to allow her to suckle, the veterinarian was called. While waiting for the veterinarian to arrive, Windy was taken into the house to raise her body temperature—which at this point had fallen below 80 degrees. The veterinarian tube fed Windy colostrum, necessary to the newborn foal's survival, and throughout the night Windy slowly gained strength.

The next day, Windy, still struggling and weak, was taken into the house again and warmed by the fireplace while her caretakers attempted to feed her milk replacer every two hours throughout the course of the night. Barely drinking and still no feeling in her lips, the next morning the local veterinarian was called again and Windy was taken to the animal hospital for treatment. After four hours of continuous, meticulous care including IVs for fluids and a blood transfusion, Windy was finally showing strong signs of improvement. Though it was a long road to recovery, Windy was nurtured back to health and is now a frisky, bright-eyed filly.

Emergency foaling situations, like Windy and Jessie's, are not something horse breeders typically associate with the excitement of foaling season, but it is important to be prepared for these challenges. An emergency is no reason to sacrifice any foal's nutritional needs and being proactive by having such items as frozen colostrum and milk replacer on hand, is the key to survival for a young foal.