

## Lady's Last Gift

I knew when Executive Lady stepped off the transport from Vienna and put her hoof on our soil that she would be seeing out her days with us. It was simply a feeling, not a thought, not an intention, but a knowing. What I did not imagine though was the drama that was waiting in the wings to unfold.

Lady showed a very unlady-like unrestrained interest in my newly imported stallion, Sand Attaché's Leading Admiral, and if she hadn't conceived from his attentions it would have been astounding! But she did conceive and promptly became the alpha mare in the group, flaunting her increasingly large belly with conceit and pride.

We waited anxiously — how is it that each day passes like lightning, but those 11 months drag on and on? I thought she was due in early May but obviously I had miscalculated because May came and went with no results. Finally, I began to think it was all some kind of cruel cosmic joke and she was having a phantom pregnancy. But on the night of June 5th, I had the strong feeling that I should check her once more before going to bed. Sure enough, it was 10:10 and two little hooves were emerging into the world.

Discreetly watching the whole process, I was impressed with Lady's experience and steadiness. Her labor was over quickly and within a few minutes she was licking her new son and very soon he was struggling and toppling in his efforts to stand. Amazingly quickly he found his balance and went immediately to the milk bar. All had transpired very satisfactorily and we were as proud as can be with mother and foal.

But that was not to be the end of the emotional night. Within three hours of birth, Lady was in trouble and she departed for the bluegrass in the sky at

dawn. Fortunately, being the kind that dislikes being caught out, I had 99% prepared for a disaster I never thought would happen. The veterinary box contained bottles and teats and all sorts of "may be needed" veterinary products. But also being reluctant to tempt fate I



*Visions Extra Texture at two weeks old.*

had not gone so far as to acquire mare's replacer milk — but had taken the precaution of establishing that my veterinarian keeps an emergency supply at his office.

Lady's orphan son is now the focus of our days. None of the standard "advice" available in books really helped very much in this time of crisis. Perhaps this is simply because the mind cannot assimilate the information during the aftermath of such a shock. But as I have never really lived life by "reading the manual", always preferring to find my own way around a problem I have no right to moan — but this time I tried desperately to find a "manual" but there was none. So good old Mother Nature's instinct was required to kick in and rescue the situation.

We did not have the luxury of a replacement mare for him, so the bottles had to be pressed into service. We rushed to the veterinary office for the milk powder and held our breath waiting for a larger supply to come from the manufacturer on the Monday morning — why does everything happen over a weekend? We just thanked our lucky stars that it was not one of the many long holiday weekends!

The next day his transfer of plasma was undertaken, and the veterinarian just stood back in awe — silent for many long

moments. Then he remarked "What a marvelous foal, look at those long legs and his excellent balance — Wow!"

I had also added a tub of probiotics to the veterinary box and I am sure it was the assiduous inclusion of them in his milk that fended off any potential problems such as diarrhea or constipation.

Socializing, I was advised, would be a problem. He wouldn't know he was a horse because he wasn't being reared by his mother. No, but as soon as we felt he was ready we brought in a neighbor's pony to help graduate him into "normal" horse play. He soon needed more than a rotund grass-guzzling toy, and now he has moved on to his "uncle" Gaz — none other than five-gaited show gelding Will's Gazette, who has retired from promotional duties at the age of 22. They have a great relationship and junior is doing as much for the old horse as senior is doing for him. Although we much regret that he has been unable to fulfill our plans to echo nature by running him and his dam back with his sire and the breeding band, he seems to feel his needs are being suitably catered to by these alternative methods.

As I write the colt is in his ninth week and drinking his milk ration from a bucket now thus allowing some long-missed full nights of sleep! He is a stunner and everyone remarks on his amazing upright carriage and beautiful movement. His chestnut coat is changing from fluffy soft to a seal-like silky velvet and is turning very dark indeed. So, as the sire is a very deep chestnut with a copper gleam to his coat, we are hoping the son is going to be the same. And if he manages to keep the flaxen tail with it that would be sensational.

With the stallion contributing the genes of CH Courageous Admiral and Attaché (Chief Of Greystone) and his dam doubling the Chief Of Greystone line and adding Anacacho Denmark into the mix, we are very proud to have him with us.

Who knows what his future will bring — it's probably tempting fate to try and predict anything but the one thing we do know for sure is that Visions Extra Texture (Tex) deserves the very best we can provide and we are certain he will grow into a magnificent and talented stallion. But if he does not, it will be all the same to us — he is our special Saddlebred, we treasure each precious moment with him. He is dear Lady's last gift to us personally and to the UK and Europe generally. We thank her.

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