

DOUBLE THE FUN!

We purchased Frosty, a 10-year-old Percheron-cross mare, from a horse auction. When we got her home, our vet gave her a thorough checkup. The friendly gray mare passed the vet exam, which included a test that showed she was not pregnant.

"Frosty's underweight," the vet had said, "but she'll improve."

Over the winter Frosty's weight increased steadily and her coat grew in luxuriously thick. By Christmas, Frosty was firmly established as a barn favorite. We all loved her.

In February, we had the vet out again to see Frosty for a follow-up exam. After a careful examination, the vet gasped, "The pregnancy test was wrong! She's having a baby!"

We were extremely worried because Frosty had not been getting the supplements an expectant mare needs. We put her in a double box stall and started prenatal care. No riding—we only hand walked Frosty to exercise her.

On a Saturday in mid-April, milk was dribbling down Frosty's legs, a sure sign that the baby was coming. My husband, David, stayed at the barn with Frosty to keep an eye on her. At 1:30 a.m. the phone rang. It was David.

"Get here now!" David yelled.

Frosty was struggling to give birth. Foals should be born head-first, with their front hooves tucked under their muzzles. At first, David could only see hooves.

Then he whooped, "Here it comes!"

The foal, a filly, sprawled onto the straw that covered the floor of the stall.

But then David said, "Oh



Twin horses are rare.

no...this is not possible!"

To his horror, there was another foal coming! Frosty gave a loud groan and delivered her second filly. The foal popped out so quickly it seemed as if it was shot out of a cannon!

We were very worried because twins are usually a disaster in horses. Mares are not really built to carry more than one baby at a time.

After leaving an emergency message for our vet, I sprinted to the barn. I couldn't help thinking of what our foal-care book had said: "Ninety percent of twin births in horses result in death or deformities for the foals."

We tried off the twins carefully and tried to help them stand, but they were desperately weak. These fillies had to be hand-fed.

At dawn, David went to buy baby bottles. The sales clerk was a little frightened by him at first—he was covered with blood and straw! But once he explained

what had happened, the sales clerk was happy to help him and wished him luck with the twins.

The vet came on Sunday morning and gave Frosty a shot so she could produce more milk, and she injected antibiotics into both Frosty and her slightly premature twins.

We milked Frosty and bottle-fed the twins six ounces of milk every hour. People came to see the miracle babies all day long. The vet and several others warned us that the twins might not live.

David and I, and some very dedicated friends, followed an around-the-clock schedule of bottle feeding, medicating and massaging the tiny fillies.

Even with shots to increase her milk production, Frosty was rapidly running dry. Fortunately, we were able to supplement her milk with some goat's milk, which was kindly donated by a local farmer.



The fillies began life as roans, but soon turned gray.

It took two days for Rockette, the second-born filly (named because she shot out like a rocket at birth), to nurse on her own.

The larger, first-born filly, Ruffles (named for her dehydrated, wrinkly skin at birth), had a harder time organizing her legs and twisting her neck to nurse. After five long days, Ruffles was finally able to nurse by herself.

Obviously Frosty was a few months pregnant when we bought her, but it was actually lucky that we didn't know she was expecting. Why? If we had supplemented her feed like we normally do for pregnant mares, Frosty's fillies would have grown so large that they would have had to compete for space in the womb to survive.

When a mare carries twins, usually the smaller, less

hearty twin dies in the womb and is naturally aborted. Sadly, this process usually causes the healthy, larger twin to abort too.

We will never breed Frosty or her daughters because we are afraid that they might produce twins and we don't want to take the risk.

The twins were born with reddish-brown coats, but today Ruffles, the calmer, more laid-back twin, is dapple-gray.

Rockette is light gray. She's smaller than Ruffles, but she makes up for her lack of size with her intelligence and mischievousness. The only defect we can detect is their slightly upturned eyes.

Both fillies are otherwise normal and healthy, and once they are trained we hope they will be wonderful riding horses.



Rockette is the smaller twin.

Ruffles was the first-born filly.