

Ivory Pal Foal Born In New Zealand



By Helen Harvard

Awaking suddenly, just after midnight on Monday, May 14, 2007, my first thoughts are of my mare, due to foal any day. From Florida, USA to Northland, New Zealand, my mare, Final's Southern Star, or Spirit as I call her, has made a long journey, bringing with her the first Ivory Pal foal to be born in New Zealand. Not only is it Ivory Pal's first foal born in New Zealand, but it is also one of the first (if not the first) Tennessee Walking Horses born in New Zealand.

As I emerge into the darkness of a winter's night there are stars overhead. My flashlight finds Spirit, nosing the ground but not eating. Could she have foaled already? Clad in night attire, I discover her water has just broken and labor has begun. Spirit allows me to stroke her while I offer her words of encouragement before I race back to the house to change into boots and jeans.

For the next 30 minutes, I watch as first one tiny white hoof appears followed by a second one, all while I am speaking to Spirit, who by now is lying on her side concentrating her efforts on giving birth. A nose appears aligned between two front legs, baby is coming head first, just as it should be. A tiny foot moves...baby is alive. So far, all is well. Good girl Spirit I say to her.

For a few minutes the mom to be rests. Crouched beside Spirit, I stroke her and she

turns and nuzzles me. Another contraction has Spirit flat on her side again, as she strains to push this new little life into the darkness of a starry southern night. Shoulders appear, a mighty push from Spirit has them through the tunnel of birth. One more push and her foal arrives with a rush. A little wet bundle landing softly in the long grass. I reach out and touch the foal for the very first time. Heaving herself upright, Spirit begins to lick her baby. As she does, I approach her quietly, hug her ample girth and tell her how very clever she is.

In the hours that follow I am entranced, oblivious to the night temperature, completely involved with my beautiful mare as together we welcome her new baby into the world. A little filly.

As they begin to interact I wish it was daylight so I could record these precious moments on film. Greeting each other, sniffing noses, blowing in nostrils, nuzzling and licking each other. Magic moments of bonding. Spirit readily shares these moments with me as I rub, stroke and speak to both her and her little one. Rubbing this new little life, I am rewarded with a surprisingly strong fuzzy neck pushed towards my hands. Spirit nickers softly, as her foal makes a first attempt to stand on her legs so she can head towards the direction of nourishment. Just two hours old and she is up on all four for the first time. Her stance lasts only a brief few moments, before she tumbles back to earth in a heap of long ungainly legs.

As both Spirit and baby rest, I sprint for the house to bring carrots of congratulations. I sit on the ground beside Spirit, hugging her, stroking her, whispering words of endearments to tell her how beautiful and clever she is, and how beautiful her baby is. After another series of attempts, the filly is finally upright on faltering legs. Tottering, our new little girl heads for a fence and I rescue her, rubbing her all over as I do before pushing her back towards her Mom. Before I leave them, I want to be sure she is feeding. Wobbly steps towards Mom are accompanied by a fragile



first whinny. She seems surprised at the sound of her own voice. A few more steps and I hear sucking noises. By 3:30 a.m., just three hours after her birth, she is upright and feeding.

Ivory Pal, you have a lovely daughter named Ivory's Southern Sp New Zealand! You would be proud I'm sure.

