

horse in the paddock was shuffling and snuffling round us. They pushed our backs, nibbled our arms, and nuzzled our faces and hair. Mothers wandered off in their feeding; after a while the foals scampered after them—for their feeding; and most of the time it's more a game than a meal. Foals are born knowing hunger but not the means of satisfying it: usually it takes about seven minutes to find out. It's their first discovery in a big exciting world.

Soon after birth these babies are wobbling to their delicate feet. Four long legs, and mostly nothing else. Nothing much besides two flickering ears on four stilts. Hobby horses. It takes a year for their bodies to catch up on their legs. Grass, dewy and sweet, is good, but to eat it they have to do more than bend; they have to kneel. And if a nuisance of a fly is tickling a hind foot it's such a long way for his head to flick it away. One baby scampers towards us; stops with a slide and a skid; and looks at us with round bold eyes, without fear—unconsciously adopting the pose of a champion, with ears pricked, head held high, neck arched, feet square on the ground, tail out from his quarters. He expresses his disapproval of us with hind feet flying, a buck, perhaps his first. Then he starts to run: it's his latest discovery.

Another filly, feeding on uneven ground with her legs in an extraordinary position, suddenly throws up her head and gallops off as though practising to be a fire horse; flying fast to the nearest fence, then back again for a tug at her mother's tail, and another chew of grass.

A second later she's scratching her nose with her off hind foot. Like her friends, she's never still. Her mother is Cuddle, one of the best handicap mares ever to race in New Zealand. Her father is Beaulivre. If breeding counts, this young miss will be a champion.



Rabbits sit and watch us. They don't run away: they know they're safe, that they can't be shot or trapped while foals are about. But as soon as the fillies and colts are moved there's never a sign of Brer Rabbit. He knows a thing or two.

The foals have baby teeth and baby "wool." It's their first coat, and it gives no indication of their permanent colour; the only way to tell that is by the hair round the eyes and on the nose—with that there is no change. They have long legs, tiny feet, and a short tail.

After a few months their lean flanks start to fill, they broaden over the loins and in the quarters. They have learnt to be handled, they don't mind a head-stall, they know what it is to be led. Soon they will make a journey to the yearling sales, probably at Trentham in January. They have to be sold; for it is only rarely that a horse is bred and trained on the same property.

