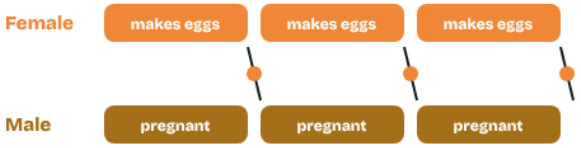
That is why

Why do male seahorses get pregnant?

Splitting the work keeps the family running: she makes the eggs while he carries, feeds and protects the last batch.

A Sharing the work

Who is busy, round after round



Eggs handed over at each orange dot. No one waits, so the pair can breed again and again.

One pregnancy: usually 2 to 4 weeks. Scientists aren't sure this is the whole reason, but it is the leading idea.

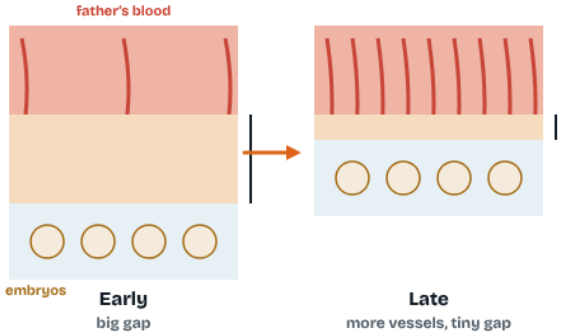
A daily hello keeps the team together



While he is pregnant, she visits him every morning. In all 6 lab tests, she gave her next eggs to the male she had greeted.

B A pouch that works like a womb

The pouch wall, early and late in pregnancy



Oxygen and food cross more easily: a placenta, with changes like those of a mammal pregnancy (pot-bellied seahorse).

1 Hormone

Prolactin, the hormone behind milk in pregnant women.

2 Defenses off

In some species, one arm of the immune system is switched off.

C Many babies, few survive

Babies per birth



Females may hand over about 200 eggs.

About 5 in 1,000 grow up

Each dot = 5 babies: only the orange one survives to adulthood (0.5%).

Long odds reward a pair that can start the next brood fast.

1 Placenta, again

Sharks and live-bearing lizards grow them too.

One makes, one carries, nobody waits.

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