



Good Presentation Makes a World of Difference

by **BAYNE WELKER JR.**

When you meet someone for the first time you generally know if you have a like or dislike for that person in the first few minutes of your interaction. The same can be said for a prospective buyer inspecting your yearling consignment. An unorganized, poorly conditioned consignment will immediately set a negative precedent. For those who have spent time looking at individuals at yearling or breeding stock sales, you know that it is a tedious and tiring process. This process becomes more aggravating when you come upon the consignment from hell. The help could care less if you see anything at all and when you do see them, they are so unruly and poorly prepped that you just mark an "x" on the catalogue page and move on to the next consignment. As this may be embellishing a bit, we all have come across these outfits from time to time. The point being that small details can make a big difference in the way your consignment is perceived by the public. Consignors from large to small have constraints and limitations depending on staff and resources, but I will try to outline several small habits to introduce into your regimens that can make a big difference at the sale.

Whether you condition your yearlings by the use of an exercise machine, pony or lunging in a round pen it is important that you take the time to teach the yearling to stand and present itself. Nothing is more frustrating than trying to look at a yearling who is moving all over the place and defies the handler to stand still. We all know that yearlings are going to be on their toes for the first initial shows after shipping on to the grounds, but a well-schooled yearling will know what is expected after settling in to his or her new surroundings.

A little schooling after the daily exercise regimen is always a good time to practice standing. Practice walking off from the point where you have stopped, as if someone were watching this yearling

walk. With time, the yearling will learn what you are asking and where to place his or her feet when he or she stops. When walking off, get them to walk out every time and extend their stride. This small exercise can pay off handsomely at

As part of the ongoing efforts of the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association (CTBA) to assist local breeders and consignors in effectively marketing their yearlings, this is the fourth in the series of articles aimed at educating and informing our readers.

Written by a select group of experts on the subject of yearling sales preparation, these editorials will be featured in this and upcoming issues of the California Thoroughbred magazine in its monthly build-up to the 2004 CTBA Sales' Del Mar Yearling Sale.

the sales especially if you have a yearling who uses himself or herself well and has an athletic walk. As mentioned earlier, not everyone may have the staff to implement this on a daily basis and that is understandable, every other day works fine and it prevents the yearling from getting bored with the process. Another means of teaching yearlings to stand is by having a groom hold the yearling during daily grooming sessions. Having a good handler on the head and another individual grooming, teaches the yearling to stand while someone is constantly moving around them.

If your staff is limited and you find you don't have enough hours in the day to school horses on both standing and walking, then make sure that your yearlings are taught to walk out on the way to and from the paddock. Make them stop for several seconds prior to turning out and bringing up. This can be practiced daily, and better results may be achieved by practicing this when bringing them up in the morning rather than at turn-out when yearlings have been standing up in the stall and have a considerable amount of pent-up energy.

For most yearlings, the ship to the sale is the first time off the farm and is very chaotic and upsetting upon arrival at the sales grounds. As you get to know

your individuals at the farm, subtle exposure to different surroundings and settings will make the transition to the sales grounds a bit smoother. Upon arrival to the grounds, try to match the appropriate handler for each yearling. If you have a small yearling, try to show him or her with the shortest handler possible. Nothing looks worse than a small yearling being shown by a tall handler. Have your show people aware of what potential buyers expect when they are inspecting yearlings and make them attentive to the buyer's requests. Good show people are more than just an individual on the end of a shank, a good handler has a soft set of hands and is able to get a yearling to move up or back with subtle urging, quite like a talented rider. As there are varying degrees of riders who don't all possess light hands, so is the case with handlers at sales. It is important that your help gives the yearling enough length of the shank while still being able to have substantial control over the horse. It is very hard to see a horse's natural gait when the handler is anchored down on the end of the shank and unnecessarily restraining the walk of the yearling after you have been schooling them to walk out.

These little practices may not sound like much but can often be the difference between a yearling being perceived as a marginal individual or an above average individual and can add up to several thousand dollars more to the consignor.

Regarding all that has been addressed about presentation, the best handler in the country is not going to make a crooked, gawky yearling bring any more than the market will allow, but a courteous and smoothly run operation is going to leave a positive mark in the minds of potential buyers and will reassure your clients that every effort was put in to the "presentation" of his or her yearling.

Bayne Welker Jr. is the Director of Sales for Mill Ridge Farm in Lexington, Kentucky.