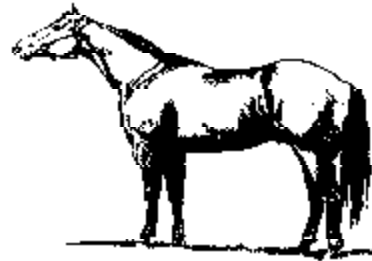


Animal Science Horse Information Series

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DON'T BREED BELOW AVERAGE MARES

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Quality is an important commercial commodity. Just look at all the ads touting quality cars, computers and shampoos.

It even carries over into the horse industry. Attend any horse sale, and what are the highest-priced horses? The high-quality ones.

Lately mare owners are searching for potential stallions in breed magazines and stallion farm brochures. They may even be surfing the Internet or watching videos of potential stallions.

But, wait just a minute. Before immersing yourself in this process, answer a critical question.

Is your mare worth breeding?

This may be a shocking revelation to many mare owners. But, let's not be short-sighted.

No too long ago, overproduction of below-average horses glutted the market, sending prices spiraling downward in the 1980's. Yes, a poor economy was also a factor. But, "Economics 101" tells us that supply can exceed demand, especially when low-quality items contribute to oversupply.

It is unlikely that below-average mares will produce above-average or profitable foals.

Now, there are lots of reason to raise a foal. But, there is not any good reason to raise a bad one.

Mare owners, who aspire to be breeders, must critically evaluate their mares, using the three "P" and one "R" test.

The "Ps" and "R" are: performance, progeny, pedigree and reproduction.

Does your mare have an above-average performance record? If you are interested in showing, was she above average in the show ring? If not, she has another chance.

Are her foals above-average show horses? If not, she is not a good candidate for breeding.

If the answer is "yes" to either of the above questions, consider her conformation.

Does she have above-average conformation? If yes, she is a good candidate. If not, do not breed her unless she has produced two to three above-average performance and conformation foals.

If you answered "yes" to either of the first two questions and her conformation is above

average, there is still another genetic factor. Does she have an above-average pedigree?

If not, you will not likely get a very good price for her foal. Most buyers carefully scrutinize pedigrees.

If her pedigree passes, you still need to consider her reproductive ability. Older mares, 16 years and above, have reduced reproductive ability. It may not be economical to mate older mares, especially if they have not had a foal annually for the past two years.

Why, are we so concerned about being above average? The nature of genetics always drifts toward the average of the population. So, if your mare is not above average in the three “P’s,” it is highly questionable that she is worth breeding.

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