

PLAN NOW, FOR A BETTER PRICE LATER

The Final Countdown

by CLYDENE BOOTS

Though sales preparation began a month or more ago, the last 30 days before the sale are critical. The yearling needs to 'peak' right at sale time, which requires careful planning. He/she needs to be physically fit enough to hold up to repeated showing in what is often hot, humid weather, even at Del Mar.

A tired, cranky yearling won't have that proud, alert look that attracts buyers, or the brisk walk that shows off a long stride. Hog-fat yearlings went out of favor years ago, but there does need to be a cover of fat over the muscling to give eye appeal, especially if the yearling is the nervous type who may drop 50 or 100 pounds just from the stress of shipping and the sale. Tummies should have been worked off (a very slow jog is good for that), but the yearling shouldn't be tucked-up like a horse that is racing. Well-muscled, well-rounded, fit and athletic-looking is the goal.

Mental attitude is also a balancing act. The yearling needs to be calm, obedient and well-mannered, yet still have enough 'fire' that he doesn't seem to be a deadhead.

In the April article, it was noted that many sellers will have their horses prepared professionally, and nearly all will consign their horses through an experienced agent. A sale like Del Mar is not a good place to undertake a 'do it yourself' project.

There will be a number of yearlings being brought out and shown in rather close quarters—colts and fillies—in an atmosphere of tension and excitement. Some will be fractious, while some will be spooking at every shadow and every corner they go around—especially under the lights. The loud-speakers will carry the noise of the auction ring and the crowd as the

horse approaches the ring. It takes a very experienced handler to help the yearling get through this safely, and simultaneously be able to show the yearling to its best advantage to potential buyers.

You and your agent should have decided by now, whether your yearling warrants individual advertising in addition to whatever advertising will be done for the entire consignment. Major improvement in the pedigree since the catalogue was printed, might need to be advertised. Many of the younger trainers are getting on the Internet, so that is a possibility to consider.

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 final in a series of six articles, aimed at educating and informing readers on this subject, to be featured in their California Thoroughbred magazine during 2003.

Significant updates can be announced from the auctioneer's stand—make sure the information is provided to the sales office in a timely fashion. A good agent will be updating pedigrees the day before the sale to learn of any significant changes, and then providing appropriate updates to the sales company.

About a month before shipping, have a skilled farrier apply light steel training plates to the front feet, then check and reset or replace them a week or so before shipping. Increase the grooming and 'showing' frequency, and follow the other steps necessary during this time frame, namely those that are described in the "Sales Preparation Guidelines" brochure available from the CTBA.

Make sure the yearling has recent boosters on all vaccinations, and a negative Coggins certificate. If he will be shipping across a state line, the Coggins

must accompany him, along with a health certificate done within 10 days of shipping. It is a good idea to have your vet give an immune system stimulant such as EqStim within a day or two of shipping. This boosts the yearling's immune system, helping to ward off anything he may be exposed to during shipping, at the sale and wherever he ships to after the sale.

Not every van or trailer is suitable for shipping yearlings. For example, avoid the kind with a steep, shaky ramp where they are packed in three-wide and have to be tied, facing other horses who will be blowing their germs into your yearling's face.

Much better is a low, solid ramp and individual 'stall-and-a-half' compartments where there is no direct contact with other horses, and where it isn't necessary to tie the yearling's head. This tying up prevents the horse from lowering his head to clear mucus and debris from his airway, thus increasing the likelihood of respiratory disease. Worse yet, is having his head tied up next to a hay net which may force him to inhale dust and hay particles during the entire trip.

The yearling's legs should be wrapped for shipping only if he is already accustomed to wearing bandages, and only if you are experienced at applying them. A lumpy or too-tight application can cause a 'bandage bow.' If a bandage comes loose, the yearling may panic and start kicking in an attempt to free his leg, injuring himself in the process. If he is shipping in the proper type of van or trailer, the chance of injury to his legs is minimized.

Information regarding arrival times at the sale will be mailed several weeks prior. If you have questions regarding this or any other aspect of the Del Mar Yearling Sale, please contact CTBA Sales Coordinator Cookie Hackworth at (626) 445-7800 ext. 243.

Remember, the required X rays for the repository must be taken within 21 days of the sale.