

Presentation for Sales

An article by Laura Clifford, TN, that appeared in the ICAA January 2005 Newsletter

Photos and photo comments added by Sharon January 2019

Trying to sell your horse? Here's some advice...

Some blame "the bad market" for their inability to sell horses. Some blame the breed's "poor reputation". I disagree with both excuses. The inability to successfully market one's horses is usually because of poor presentation by the seller.

Through looking at how I buy horses and how I sell my farm's horses, I have come up with five factors that the average horse buyer wants to see and will pay good money for.

The first is **the training and the level of training** of the horse. If the horse is broke to ride, you'd better be willing to offer to jump on! Even if the prospective buyer doesn't ask, tack up, jump on, ride around, and get them to ride "their horse". Nothing sells a horse faster than getting the buyer and their children up on the horse.

On the other hand, not having any riding tack on hand, or not being willing to ride your own horse, tells the buyer that it's probably not as well trained as you say it is, and you will lose the sale.

The **overall condition of the horse** is very important. Having a well-fed horse that is well groomed -- including being clipped and shod, as though ready to walk into a show arena -- are excellent selling points. Being up-to-date on farriery, vaccinations and deworming, as well as having a current Coggins report handy, are enticements for the buyer and proves that they are getting a horse that is "up to par".

The **general condition of your facility** is a surprisingly strong selling point. Buyers will oftentimes judge how much they should pay for a horse based on the "level" of the facility they are at.

One expects to pay more at a million-dollar barn than at a "backyard breeder" with poor fences and no barn at all. The buyer feels the horses are of higher quality at a nice facility.

If you don't have suitable facilities for the type of horse you are selling, you may consider consigning the horse to an appropriate sale barn, or boarding that horse at a nice facility for a few months.

There is nothing wrong with selling horses from your own farm, though there are some aspects that should be considered for marketability as well as the safety and comfort of the prospective buyers.

Avoid the appearance of a feed lot by freshly bedding your stalls and putting the individual "sale horses" inside. This will make your place look "emptier" and larger as well as allow the buyers to focus on specific horses.

If it has been a wet time of year, scrape away as much mud as you can. Create a walkway between paddocks, or use temporary fencing to segregate horses so that buyers don't have to carry their children through herds of interested horses. The safest method of showing off your horses while at liberty is to keep the buyer on one side of the fence and the horses on the other.

Put your best conditioned horses up front, whether or not they are for sale. If you have horses that are not in prime condition, don't even consider trying to sell them until they are in good shape.

If you have a rescue horse that is in the beginning stages of "coming back" or the old family mare that may not make it to next winter, you might consider making a big deal out of showing off these decrepit horses and telling their story. Some buyers, catching a glimpse of a bony, wormy horse with long toes, might feel it is appropriate to call the authorities if they feel you are hiding something.

Buyers like **local "fair market value"**. Basing a horse's price on their age, training level, discipline, and what comparable horses in the area are selling for lets the buyer feel like it's an even exchange.

Whether or not a horse is **registered or has a "pedigree to die for"** depends on the buyer and the horse's intended use. A breeder will be more interested in a pedigree and the family history than a family looking for a good weekend trail horse, and a good, safe trail horse of questionable heritage often commands a much higher price than an unbroke papered horse.

Salability of a horse has little to do with the market or breed. Sales are made primarily in the presentation. Excuses are made in lieu of presentation.

Added Notes by Sharon: Under the overall condition of the horse, it may be good to add 5-Panel test results, whether or not the horse is registered. In some cases, for horses that will be used for breeding, color and/or pattern test results might be good to have for those horses with colors or patterns that draw sales or to prove the color possibilities of the foal. In the case of Appaloosas, especially fewspots or others that may be questionable, it may also be good to have negative results for gray.

The following is a theoretical sales ad:

FOR SALE: 5-year-old, 15.2 hand leopard mare show prospect! Bombproof, sound, goes E/W, jumps 4-ft clean. \$5,000 to right home.

Which facility or farm would you choose to pay that kind of money for this horse?

This?



Or This?



While it can be expensive to have the facilities and fencing on the right, some things are free or nearly free other than your time and sweat. Start assessing in the spring what you can do, such as clean up the clutter. Maybe give the old barn a coat of paint and make minor repairs. If you have old, ratty fencing and can't afford new, the wide strips of electric tape are much more affordable, attractive, and can be solar powered if there is nowhere to plug it in. At least try to make the front of the property attractive to the prospective buyer. First impressions; you know that old saying.