


 Hey Neighbor

For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

Stallion selection is difficult decision

It's time to breed a mare for next year's foal, but which stallion should be used for mating?

This is a complex question for people with mares who do not have their own stallions. There is no easy answer, and the options are seemingly endless.

Many mare owners make the decision several months, sometimes even years, in advance. For others, selecting a stallion for mating is a spur-of-the-moment thing, that in reality deserves special consideration.

"There are a number of factors involved in selecting a stallion," according to Joann Kouba, K-State assistant professor in equine research and teaching.

"It's a very individual situation, and the factors that people consider important can be very differ-

ent," she said.

First criterion in stallion selection is to know what one expects from his offspring. "It's essential to have a plan for the foal rather than just breed to a stallion because he is a certain color or somebody else bred their mare to him," Kouba said.

The mare is an intricate part of the equation. If one has a pleasure-riding mare and wants to raise that type, then a stallion with such a background would be selected. "However, if there is an interest in diversifying usage of the offspring, breeding to a stallion with a cow horse or other performance pedigree might be considered," the specialist suggested.

"The pedigree of the stallion should be strong in the traits wanted in the foal and what it might be

expected to do in the future," she added.

The stallion should have a performance and sire record for the characteristics desired. "There are a lot of unproven stallions available for breeding," Kouba said. "It's best if you know the stallion can perform and produce the traits for which he is bred."

Conformation of the stallion is of high importance. "The stallion must

complement the mare," Kouba recognized.

A long-backed mare preferably would not be mated to a long-backed stallion. Likewise, a light muscled mare probably should be bred to a heavier muscled sire.

"If a mare has a conformation deficiency, it would be desirable to make up for that weakness by crossing her with a stallions that is stronger in that area," Kouba emphasized.

Changes desired in an offspring can sometimes be compensated for by the stallion. "When a mare is short, and more height is wanted, a person can try to breed to a taller sire and that cross might give you the desired result, but it doesn't always work that way," the specialist continued.

Photographs, written

material and advertising of stallions can sometimes be deceiving or not provide a mare owner with enough information. "If possible it's always best to look at the stallion before making a decision," Kouba said.

A calm temperament is essential in the stallion. "Despite the genetics and conformation of your foal, he is not going to be a great horse without a good temperament," Kouba said.

"There is no excuse for using a stallion with a bad attitude and transmitting those characteristics to his offspring," she continued.

While there are discussions about whether the stallion or the mare might contribute more to fem-

perament of the foal, Kouba is of the opinion that the percentages are weighted a little heavier toward the mare.

"I think both parents are important for how that foal will turn out, but a mare's unique personality and her attitude around people as that foal is growing, can certainly be picked up by her foal," she said.

"If a stallion is a proven producer, I think his contribution to the foal comes out more in the foal's athletic ability and the ease with which that foal can be trained," she said. Although she noted that there is no reason to breed to a stallion with a bad attitude

and risk passing that trait onto a foal when there are so many stallions available for breeding.

Color seems to go in fads with horse owners, and some people have a definite color preference in horses they own, breed and ride. However, in actuality, color of a horse should not take precedence over the aforementioned criteria. A stallion meeting all other requirements for mating, and with a personally preferred color, can then be considered as positive for use on one's mare.

There is "no industry standard" for stallion service fees. However, Kouba said, "You usually get what you pay for."

A "baseline of \$1,000" was calculated by the specialist. "A stallion with a service fee in that area should have a performance record, but they may not be a proven producer yet," she explained.

There are stallions in the \$500 to \$1,000 fee range, that have excellent pedigrees and should be performers and producers, but they are not proven in either area. "These stallions can be used successfully in some instances, but there is no proof of their producing ability," Kouba pointed out.

Paying higher stallion fees and also extremely low stud fees was discouraged. It's difficult to justify

paying a high fee, especially if a person does not have an extensive plan to take the offspring to the maximum potential for which it was bred, she clarified.

While many stallions are standing for service fees from \$200 to \$500, Kouba warned that these stallions often lack the potential to be top producers. "There are too many horses being raised that do not have the quality and ability to improve the industry," Kouba said. "I don't think we need to be producing more of those horses."

Other things mare owners need to consider when selecting a stallion for

breeding include mare care and facilities, veterinarian costs, guarantees and breeding contracts.

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"It's a very individual situation, and the factors that people consider important can be very different," she insisted.

First criteria in stallion selection is to know what one expects from his offspring. "It's essential to have a plan for the foal, rather than just breed to a stallion because he is a certain color or somebody else bred their mare to him," Kouba said.

The mare is an intricate part of the equation. If one has a pleasure-riding mare and wants to raise that type, then a stallion with such a background would be selected. "However, if there is an interest in diversifying usage of the offspring, breeding to a stallion with a cow horse or other performance pedigree might be considered," the specialist suggested.

"The pedigree of the stallion should be strong in the traits wanted in the foal and what it might be expected to do in the future," she added.

The stallion should have a performance and sire record for the characteristics desired. "There are a lot of unproven stallions available for breeding," Kouba related. "It's best if you know the stallion can perform and produce the traits for which he is bred."

Conformation of the stallion is of high importance. "The stallion must complement the mare," Kouba recognized.

A long-backed mare preferably would not be mated to a long-backed stallion. Likewise, a light muscled mare probably should be bred to a heavier muscled sire.

"If a mare has a conformation deficiency, it would be desirable to make up for that weakness, by crossing her with a stallion that is stronger in that area," Kouba emphasized.

Changes desired in an offspring can sometimes be compensated for by the stallion. "When a mare is short, and more height is wanted, a person can try to breed to a taller sire. That cross might produce the desired result, but it doesn't always work that way," the specialist indicated.

Photographs, written material and advertising of stallions can sometimes be deceiving or not provide a mare owner with enough information. "If possible, it's always best to go see the stallion before making a decision," Kouba advised.

A calm temperament is essential in the stallion. "Despite the genetics and conformation of a foal, he is not going to be a great horse without a good temperament," Kouba acknowledged.

"There is no excuse for using a stallion with a bad attitude and transmitting those characteristics to his offspring," she continued.

While there are discussions about whether the stallion or the mare might contribute more to the temperament of the foal, Kouba is of the opinion that the percentages are weighted a little heavier towards the mare.

"I think both parents are important for how that foal will turn out, but a mare's unique personality and her attitude around people as that foal is growing, can certainly be picked up by her foal. That will probably affect that foal's personality more than the stallion's influence," the specialist stated.

"If a stallion is a proven producer, I think his contribution to the foal comes out more in the foal's athletic ability, and the ease with which that foal can be trained," she continued. "However, there is no reason to breed to a stallion with a bad attitude and risk copying those behaviors to the foal, when such a large number of stallions are available for breeding."

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A stallion meeting all other requirements for mating, and with a personally preferred color, can then be considered as positive for use on one's mare.

There is "no industry standard" for stallion service fees. However, Kouba admitted, "You usually get what you pay for."

A "baseline of \$1,000" was calculated by the specialist. "A stallion with a service fee in that area should have a performance and, preferably also, a proven sire record," she explained.

There are plenty of stallions in the \$500 to \$1,000 fee range, that have excellent pedigrees and might have a performance record, but they may not be a proven producer yet. "These stallions can be used successfully as a cross on a mare, but you just need to realize there is no track record for the stallion in terms of producing ability," Kouba pointed out.

While many stallions are standing for service fees from \$200 to \$500, Kouba warned that these stallions often lack the potential to be top producers. "There are too many horses being raised that do not have the quality and ability to improve the industry," Kouba declared. "I don't think we need to be producing more of those horses."

Other things mare owners need to consider when selecting a stallion for breeding include mare care and facilities, veterinarian costs, guarantees and breeding contracts.



A stallion for breeding a mare should first be selected for what is expected from his offspring. Also of key importance are conformation and temperament as well as cost of service fees.