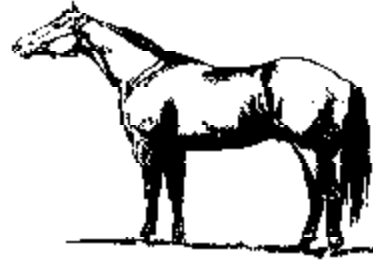


Extension Animal Science Horse Information Series

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LET'S NOT OVERPRODUCE HORSES

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Manufacturers know about supply and demand. You all have seen advertisements from car makers offering sale incentives on overproduced, low-quality or unpopular models.

You do not want to have to do the same thing with horses.

Now that spring is around the corner, some mare owners may view high sale averages or the large amounts of prize money available in most equine sport events and think, "Old Molly might produce a big-buck winner."

In the 1980's, horse prices took a nose-dive. The economy was a major factor in this price downturn. But, oversupply of below-average horses was also a big factor. Just like cars or other products, below-average horses are not in demand.

Even when the horse market was low, the demand and price for top performance and proven breeding horses were good.

Let us not get our industry into the same fix it was in the '80's by producing too many below-average foals.

Who has a stake in this problem? All mare owners, stallion owners and breed associations do.

What can be done? Owners need to realize that every mare does not deserve to produce foals nor all stallions sire foals.

What are some of the criteria you should use to decide which mares should be allowed to reproduce?

Mares with proven performance records produce foals with a more predictable future that also sell for more. The famous King Ranch performance tests all mares on the ranch before placing them in their breeding program. Mares that do not perform well are not bred.

When prices are high, as they are now, there is a tendency to breed young mares which have no performance or show records. Don't.

Also, mares should measure up to some standard of excellence in conformation. Cull mares with serious conformational defects and poor dispositions.

Pedigrees should not be the major deciding factor in keeping a young mare for breeding. Keep fillies and young mares out of good-producing dams that meet performance and conformation guidelines. Pedigrees are important in marketing and may be the deciding factor of which mares to keep among those that meet performance and conformation criteria.

The same criteria should be used before breeding stallions. They should have above-average to superior performance records, be sound, have good-to-excellent conformation and an acceptable pedigree.

Stallions without performance records are questionable in today's economy. If a stallion is of superior conformation and pedigree, but injured, they should be test-bred to determine their breeding value before standing them to the public.

Geld stallions with average or below performance, conformation and pedigree.

Breed associations can encourage breeding of superior mares and stallions by providing good performance records, recognizing superior performance horses and having incentive programs. Programs that emphasize geldings, pleasure riding and showing of mares that are not valuable as broodmares help keep these individuals from over populating the horse industry with below-average foals.

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