



# The KFPS Inspections: Not For Sissies

By Sally Lawing

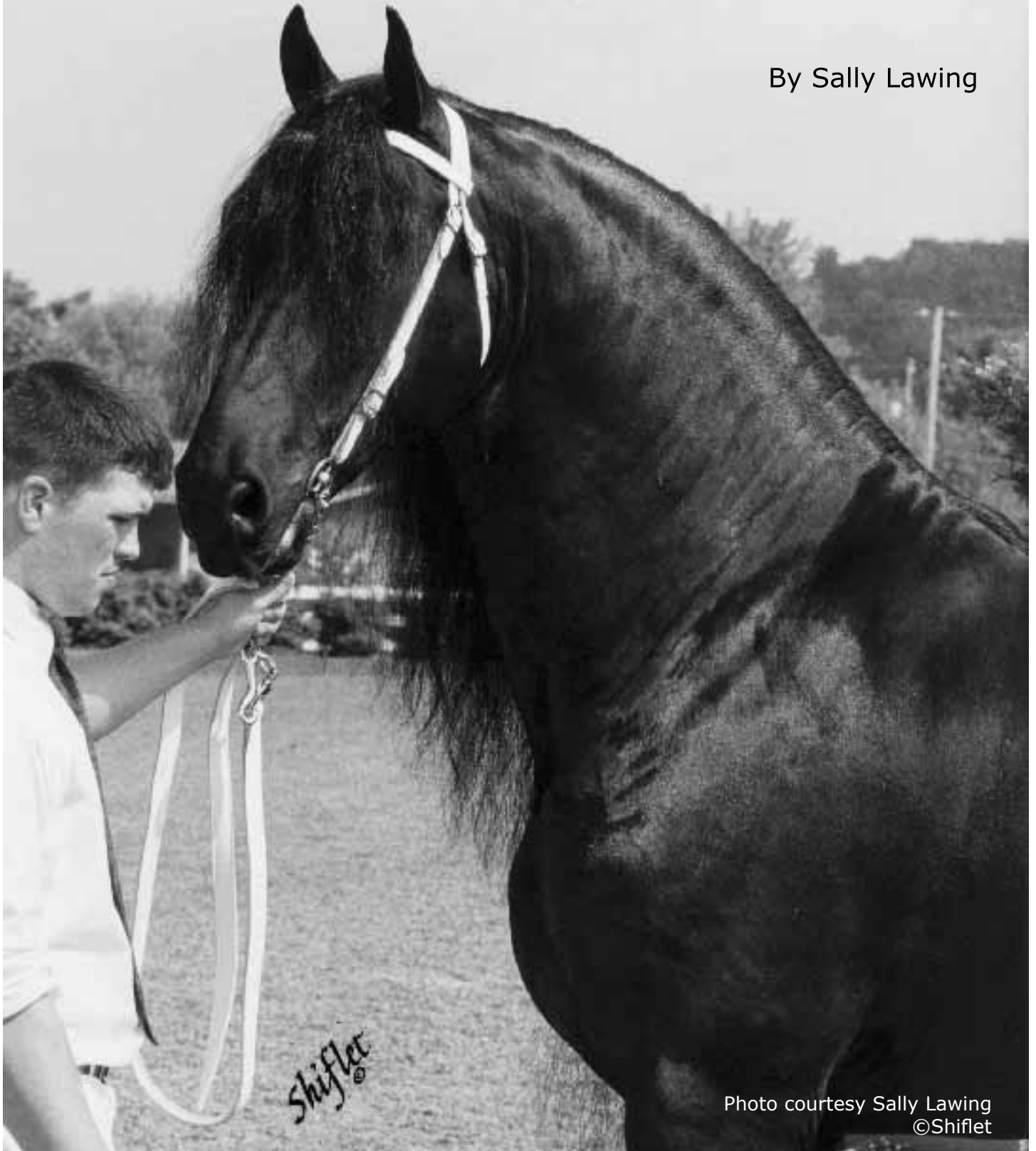


Photo courtesy Sally Lawing  
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**By** the time this article is published, FHANA members will be actively planning for the fall inspection circuit. There have been numerous articles in the past on preparing horses for the inspection, but the purpose of this article is to help Friesian owners better understand the inspection process as well as the applicable rules. Hopefully, this will enable some owners to avoid undue disappointment on inspection day.

Every owner has high hopes for the foals and adult horses they take to the inspection. Everyone imagines their foal receiving a first premium and dreams of their mare being awarded the star predicate. But the truth is, unlike in Lake Wobegon, where all the children “are above average,” all of our horses, no matter how much we love them, are **not** above average. First premium foals are a rarity, and on average, only about 25% of mares presented for the first time will make star. The percentage is even lower when mares are entered in the “repeat for star” category.

While owners should always do all they can to present their horses in the best possible condition in order to obtain the best result, awareness of this statistical reality, coupled with a realistic assessment of the qualities of the horses to be judged, can make acceptance of the judges’ decisions easier to understand and accept.

### Adult Horses

#### Mares and Geldings:

When presenting an adult mare or gelding, the first hurdle is acceptance into the studbook. This is by no means automatic, and it is not unusual to see one or two horses rejected at any inspection site, mainly for lameness or failure to meet the minimum height. Here are the minimum requirements for the mare and gelding studbooks:

Eligibility for Studbook Mare or Studbook Gelding requires that they:

- a. be registered in the Foal Book;
- b. be at least 1.54 meters (15.0 hands) at the withers;
- c. be black and have no white except for a small star or a few white hairs on the forehead or muzzle; white is not permitted on the body, legs or hoofs;
- d. be sound; unsound horses cannot enter the Studbook;
- e. be free of hereditary defects (mares with hereditary defects should not be used for breeding); criteria of rejection are, among others: ringbone, bone spavin, curb, bog spavin, swollen stifle joint, lameness, dished face, insufficient shoulder height, poor use of the hind legs, defects of the stifle including a locking or loose stifle or improper development of the hock.

#### FHANA Rules & Regulations 3.3.1.2.

If your horse is lame on the day of the inspection, the horse should be withdrawn and re-presented at a later date if the problem can be remedied. Having the horse labeled as “not taken up in the studbook” will remain on the horse’s papers forever and will negatively impact its value. Similarly, if your horse is too small, give it another year to mature (mares **do not** have to be presented at 3 years), and be sure to have shoes applied well in advance of inspection day.<sup>1</sup> With shoes, the hooves will grow out and can easily add the necessary inch required to reach the minimum for studbook or star. Assuming your horse meets these basic requirements, it should be promoted to the studbook. Whether it also receives a premium depends on how well it meets the breed standards in exterior appearance and movement. (Note also that the height requirements are different for star: Mares must be at least 1.56 meters (15.1 ½ hands), while geldings and stallions must be at least 1.58 meters (15.2 ¼ hands)).

When the judges evaluate your adult horse, they are doing two things at once. First, they are judging your horse and how well it compares to the breed standard. Second, they are gathering data for the Studbook by using the 25 specific criteria on the linear score sheet. This data will ultimately be used in establishing and updating the breeding values for the approved stallions. These results impact (1) whether provisionally approved stallions receive permanent approval and (2) the selection of stallions for future breeding to a particular mare.

<sup>1</sup> There are shoeing rules in the KFPS Inspection Regulations: “The horses must be shod all around with standard shoes when presented in every round of judging. Standard shoes are to be no thicker than 8 mm and no wider than 25 mm and may not be equipped with wedges, soles or other provisions. Improper shoeing can be cause for the jury to bar the horse from participation in the inspection or to declare the results of an inspection as invalid. Yearlings are inspected without shoes whether presented during a local judging event or at the Central Inspection.”



## Inspection, continued..

Owners can and should use the blank linear score sheet form (see attached) to objectively assess their own horses in advance of the inspection, but only if they can take off their “barn blinders” and look at each horse in the harsh light of day and without sentimentality. It is important to do this at least 90 days in advance of the inspection because some aspects of the linear score are potentially susceptible to improvement given adequate time. However, many other components of the linear score are immutable, and recognition of the presence of these deficiencies can enable an owner to adjust his or her expectations and/or recognize that taking a horse back for “repeat for star” is an exercise in futility. **(Please note that the linear score form may be changed slightly from one year to the next.)**

Whether an adult horse receives a premium depends on the final scores assigned by the judges for the 5 evaluative characteristics shown at the bottom of the form: (1) Racial, (2) Frame, (3) Feet and Legs, (4) Walk, and (5) Trot. Using the blank linear score sheet form, owners should be able to develop a realistic estimate of what these scores will be and thereby get an idea of the likely result of the inspection.

The following table, reproduced from the “2010 KFPS Keuring Program,” shows the *average* of the 5 scores required for the different inspection results:

>7.5	Studbook with 1 <sup>st</sup> premium Star
~7.0	Studbook with 2 <sup>nd</sup> premium Star
~6-7	Studbook with 3 <sup>rd</sup> premium
~6.0	Studbook with no premium
<6.0	Remains in Foalbook

Note that these marks are an *average* of the 5 summary scores, so a low score in one category can be offset by a higher score in another category, provided the low score is not *too* low: a horse with a score of 4 or less in any of the 5 criteria will not be promoted to the Studbook, and a horse with a score of 5 or less in any one of the 5 criteria cannot be entered into the star register.

Looking at the linear score form, one can see that each one of the 25 criteria is a component of one of the five evaluative characteristics or “score groups.” For example: Head, Head and neck connection, Neck position and length, Hair and Color are all components of Racial Type. In addition, each of *these* six criteria are “maximum,” rather than “optimal” characteristics, meaning that more is better. (Note the gray shaded boxes indicating the most desirable scores for each individual characteristic.)



Photo by Marc DiLeo©



Voorlaatste versie: 01-05-2007, Engels

**Version: 01-05-2010**

gender:		name:										
height at withers:		reg. no.:						cat. no.:				
markings:		sire:						dam:				
markings not allowed:		reg. no.:						reg. no.:				
Judging location:		date:						jury members:				
element	characteristic	Group	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	characteristic
head	plain	racial										noble
head-neck connection	heavy	racial										light
neck	short	racial										long
	horizontal	racial										vertical
shoulder	steep	frame										sloping
back	weak	frame										tight
loins	weak	frame										tight
croup	straight	frame										sloping
	short	frame										long
body	downhill	frame										upstanding
length forearm	short	frame										long
front legs	straight	beenw										standing under
hind legs	sickled	beenw										straight
pasterns	short	beenw										long
hooves	small	beenw										large
quality of legs	course	beenw										hard
hair	little	racial										much
color	faded black	racial										jet black
front legs	toeing-in	beenw										toeing-out
walk	short	walk										long
	weak	walk										powerful
trot	short	trot										long
	weak	trot										powerful
	unbalanced	trot										balanced
	not supple	trot										supple
		raciale type	frame	feet & legs	walk	trot						
		foalbook										

This makes sense when you consider that we want our horses to be as black as possible, to have as much hair as possible and to have beautiful (“noble”) heads placed on vertical necks.

Most owners should be able to score their own horses for these six characteristics. If unsure what constitutes a “noble” head, here is the official description from the “2010 KFPS Keuring Program”:

A small, expressive, noble head, in which the eyes are placed far apart. The nose bone is preferably a bit dished, nostrils are large. The jaws are light and the length of the opening of the mouth long. The eyes are large and clear. The small, attentive ears point lightly towards each other.



## Inspection, continued..

The opposite of a “noble” head could be a head that is too large or coarse. The profile should not be convex, nor should the eyes be too small or sleepy-looking.

To assess the position of the neck, look at your horse when it is relaxed, perhaps in cross ties. Does the neck rise up vertically from the shoulders or does it extend straight out, more horizontal than vertical? Like everything else on the score form, this is a matter of degree and should be scored accordingly.

The one attribute of type that is most amenable to improvement is color. This is best accomplished by keeping your horse out of the summer sun for the months preceding the fall inspections. You may be surprised to find that your black horse appreciates being inside with a fan away from the biting flies during the heat of the day!

It is against the KFPS Inspection Regulations to apply dye or other colorants to the coat to make it appear blacker or to try to conceal unacceptable markings. Similarly, the addition of hair (extensions, switches, etc.) is not permitted.

Hair may be subject to improvement but requires more than a few months. The best way to grow thicker and longer hair is to handle it as little as possible. Excessive brushing breaks the hair and can also pull it out. Braiding the hair can be helpful but may not be advisable if the horse is to be turned out. Snagging a braid on a tree or fence can do a lot of damage.

A horse need not “max out” on all six of the components of type in order to receive a star-worthy score of 7.0. For example, a less than super-black horse with a beautiful head and neck and moderate hair will, in most cases, receive a 7.0.

A similar assessment can be made of the body conformation or ‘Frame’ of each horse. The general description of ideal build as set forth in the “2010 KFPS Keuring Program,” is helpful in visualizing the overall picture:

A harmoniously, functionally, evenly, and upwardly built horse with a long forearm and not too heavy in the body. The horse is placed in a rectangle with a ratio between front end, middle section, and hind end is 1:1:1.

This general description is reflected in 7 components on the linear score sheet, with some being “maximum” (croup length, body uphill or downhill, forearm length) and others being “optimal” (back, loins, croup angle). If a horse is far from the desired mark in one or more conformation elements, this will be reflected in the conformation score. Similarly, multiple faults will have a cumulative adverse impact on the score. Common faults that are fairly easy to see are: a too steep or too short croup, a straight shoulder or a back that is too long or hollow.

The legs are also important, but may be more difficult for the average owner to evaluate. Use the official diagrams of the legs and feet (attached) and compare them to the horse as it stands squarely on level ground. Note whether the lines shown in the illustrations of correct conformation can be similarly placed on the subject horse.

A fairly common fault of the hind legs is sickle hocks. Note that the score for the hind legs is at the midpoint. This is because the legs should not be too straight or too angled (sickle hocked). The degree of deviation of the legs from the desired conformation will determine how far from the ideal mark the horse should be scored.

The basic gaits in hand are very important in whether the horse receives a premium. The quality of the walk is reflected in 2 component scores, while the trot has 4 components. Here are the official descriptions of the gaits, again from the “2010 KFPS Keuring Program”:



Photo courtesy Sally Lawing



Photo by Cally Matherly©



Photos by Cally Matherly



**Walk:** The walk is roomy and a pure 4-beat. The legs are straight in walk as seen from the front and behind. The hind leg shows bend in the hock and is powerfully and well placed under the body. The hind leg moves the foreleg, which is moved forward with room and lots of freedom in the shoulder.

**Trot:** The trot is a pure 2-beat. The hind leg is powerfully and well placed under the body and shows with that much bend in the hock. The front leg shows knee action and is well placed forward. The trot is characterized by suppleness and long moment of suspension. The horse shows with that much balance and rises in the front with an elevated neck. As seen from the front and the back the legs need to be straight.

The best way to optimize these scores is to put the horse in training for 90 days or more. This will help with overall conditioning, muscle development and also with the gaits. Many people feel that driving and long lining are more beneficial in preparing the horse for inspection than riding. Regardless of the type of work, as the horse becomes more fit, it should look better and move better.

#### A Special Note about Presenting Mares with Foals:

As a general rule, it is not advisable to present a mare for judging in the same year that she has had a foal. This is a recipe for disappointment, yet many owners attempt this year after year. If you need or want to present your mare for studbook or star in the same year she has had a foal, you really owe it to her and to yourself to wean the foal far enough in advance of the inspection to give the mare adequate time to fully recover her weight and fitness. Even if the mare is not thin (and most are), she is not going to look and show her best while still nursing. Six weeks is a minimum for most mares to recover their form, but this will **not** be sufficient if the mare is very thin or if her coat is faded from being in the sun all summer long.

If the foal is weaned prior to inspection, it can still be shown to best advantage at the side of the dam if the mare is reasonably kind and tolerant. However, the mare and foal will need to be shipped and stabled separately to prevent the foal from resuming nursing. (Yes they will!)

#### Stallions:

FHANA members should already be aware that only very few young stallions presented for consideration as breeding stallions will be accepted. One only needs to look at the numbers from last year's judging to appreciate this. Approximately 74 stallions were presented across the United States and Canada in 2010. Of these, only four were considered for referral to the central testing, and only one was ultimately granted provisional approval for breeding. Indeed, this has been the case each



## Inspection, continued..

year since we have held the 70 day test in the United States: Michiel, Sipke, Tonjes and Wybren were the only stallions to be approved in their respective years.

This is not intended to discourage anyone from taking a stallion to be judged, but only to remind all to have reasonable expectations.

Interestingly, approximately 40% of the stallions presented in North America in 2010 were granted star status. This high figure presumably reflects awareness that only the very best stallions stand a chance and that many more young stallions were not taken to an inspection.

### Weanling Colts and Fillies

Colts and fillies are judged in a similar fashion to adult horses, with one important distinction. The weanlings are judged on “development” rather than type. At such a young age, the hair cannot be assessed, and the judges do not care if the youngsters are sunburned. Often, the champion colt or filly will look more red than black!

The judges have the blue foal paper in hand when they judge the weanlings. Thus, they know the date of birth of each entry, and they can compare it mentally to all the others they have seen. A weanling that had a rough start (perhaps spending its first days or weeks in a hospital), or one that has had an injury or illness, particularly if this led to a prolonged period of stall rest, may not have attained the expected development of a foal the same age. Think hard about showing a foal if it has experienced this type of setback. Even though the foal will most likely make a complete recovery over time, it may be at a disadvantage on inspection day due to lack of muscle development, balance, etc., and getting a third premium, or no premium, will stay on the horse’s papers forever.

Occasionally, foals will hurt themselves in transit to the inspection site. If the foal is lame as a result, it is best not to show it, as it will likely get “no premium.” While it is disappointing to have to withdraw a foal at the last minute, this is better than having the poor result recorded for eternity.

To show at their best, foals need proper nutrition and worming. Most will need nothing more than their mother’s milk, but some will benefit from creep feeding. Beware, however, of getting the foal **too** fat. Overfeeding can damage the joints, but as for inspection day, a too fat foal will often be marked down due to having an apparently short, thick neck. Look hard at your foals 30-45 days out from the inspection and adjust their diets accordingly.

### CONCLUSION

Hopefully, a careful objective evaluation of one’s own horses will enable owners to develop a reasonable expectation so as to avoid disappointment on inspection day. Remember that the judges have a job to do that goes beyond giving your entry a premium. Be a good sport, and accept their decision and comments with respect. Remember that this process is not like a 5 year old’s T-Ball team. Everyone will not get a trophy just for showing up! Try to learn as much as possible by watching the horses of others as they are judged and listen to the comments of the judges.



Photo by Cally Matherly©

Appendix O

CONFORMATION OF THE LEGS

**FRONT LEGS  
FRONT VIEW**



Imagine two parallel lines dropped from the point of the shoulder to the ground. Each line should pass through the centers of the knees, canons, fetlocks and hoofs.

**Correct**



**Base Wide**



**Base Narrow**



**Bow Legs**



**Knock Knees**



**Toes Out  
or Splay Foot**



**Toes In  
or Pigeon Toed**





Appendix O, Continued

FRONT LEGS  
SIDE VIEW

Correct

Standing Under

Standing Over

Back in the Knee  
or Calf Knee

Over in the Knee  
or Buck Knee

Upright Pastern  
or Too Straight

Weak Pastern

## HIND LEGS REAR VIEW



Correct

Imagine two parallel lines dropped from the points of the hocks to the ground. Each line should pass through the centers of the hock, the cannon and the fetlock joint.



Base Wide



Base Narrow



Cow Hocked  
Splay Footed



Bow Legged  
Pigeon Toed



Correct

A straight line from the point of the buttocks should touch the back of the fetlock joint.



Sickle Hocked  
Standing Under



Standing Off Hocks  
or Carnped Out

## HIND LEGS - SIDE VIEW



Photos by Cally Matherly©



## Five Preparation Steps - By Sherry Mathers

**First**, evaluate your horse. It is important to know how your horse's conformation and movement stack up to the ideal. I highly recommend attending one of FHANA's evaluation clinics so you can learn what the judges are looking for when they inspect your horse. If at all possible, take your horse to the clinic with you to be evaluated or ask another Friesian owner or trainer to help you evaluate your horse. If your horse has already been inspected as an adult, take out the linear score sheet you received and look at it carefully. In each category your horse was given a score. If the score does not appear in one of the shaded boxes, then your horse needs improvement in that area. Once you understand where your horse needs help (and they all do!), you can begin to make those improvements.

**Second**, get your horse on a good nutritional program and make sure to feed a good coat supplement. A horse needs protein and fat to build muscle and grow hair. A properly fed horse will already be shiny and you may think that is good enough. But I promise you, a good coat supplement will improve even an already shiny coat.

**Third**, exercise your horse! If you want your horse to look it's best and more importantly, move the way it should, exercise is crucial. Riding, lunging and hand walking will all help. Driving, either with a cart or ground driving, is an excellent exercise for Friesians and has the added benefit of progressing training while fitting the horse for the inspection. While not everyone has the skills to train their horse to the cart, nearly anyone can ground drive their horse.

**Fourth**, train your horse. Train him to drive or ground drive. Train him to trot beside you on a loose lead. Train her to pose for the judges and to stand quietly while the judges examine her. Train your horse to walk beside you quietly and purposefully. Don't blame the runners when your horse does not behave, if you have not taken the time to train him! And don't forget to trailer train your horse! Do not wait until a week before the inspection and then decide it would be a good time to train him to load. Not only will early trailer training cut down on the stress for you and your horse, it will also help ensure she trailers safely and arrives at the inspection uninjured.

**Fifth**, groom and brush your horse. Not just the day of the inspection, but every day for months before the big day. Regular grooming will give your horse the kind of lovely coat that supplements alone simply can't. Trim your horse. Use clippers to remove all of those long hairs on the face, neck and body. Learn how to clip your horse's legs to maximize the look of his feathering. Be generous with conditioner on the mane, tail and feathering. Keep manes braided to encourage growth and minimize hair loss. And remember, while everyone appreciates bountiful manes, tails and feathers, do not skimp on grooming and conditioning the body coat.

If you do these five things, you will be off to a good start on preparing your horse. See you at the inspection!