

Photographing Your Foal



**Putting Their Best Hoof
(and Their Ears)
Forward in Your Sale Ad**

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When selling your foal, you want to present them in a way that will make potential buyers stop and look at your ad. Many events happened to get you here and many of those you captured in a photo: You felt the rush of joy that she was indeed in foal with the accompanying photo of the sonogram or video of the tiny fluttering heartbeat. You may have even helped with the birth and of course had your cell phone out to get that precious first photo. Your friends and family huddled around their phones or computers looking at the pictures, commenting on social media about how adorable and precious she is, what long legs he has, and offering many congratulations. I bet you still have those in your phone now, indeed still treasured by you. Then came getting to know your foal, your pride beaming as your friends oohed and aaahed over your pictures, asking for more.

Months after this whole wonderful scary exciting ride began, you are ready to put your foal up for sale. You know those photos you took with your phone that everyone loved so much? They are not the type of photos you want to use to advertise your foal for sale. All those are photos that - while wonderful for you, your friends and family - are what I call, "Through the eyes of love," photos. They pull at your heart, but you want photos that will pull at someone's checkbook.



Do This -- Not That

Common mistakes people make when taking photos for their sale ad and how to avoid them

Dos



Good lighting shows off his muscles, a helper encouraged his mom to keep moving, and the background is clear as is the foreground. This shows an uphill movement.



Bending down and taking the photo at the height of the shoulder gives a more accurate depiction of his size. The front leg closer to the camera is slightly in front of the front leg away from the camera. This position helps them not lean forward over their legs. The back legs set - so the closest one to the camera is slightly behind the one farther from the camera - shows the croup nicely. Having your foal step forward and back can help set them up. Ears are forward in an alert posture done with a rattling can.

A few simple steps can turn an average ad into one that gets attention.

Get Help—At least 2 other people to get them moving and get their attention for conformation photos.

Lighting—Avoid the “Golden Hour.” This is the hour before sunset and after sunrise that brings out the copper tones in hair. Avoid harsh lighting from the sun being directly overhead, which leads to dark shadows. Full sunshine is best to give enough light to capture movement clearly and show good muscle definition.

Location—Choose a flat area with low grass and nothing distracting in the back or foreground. A new pasture that your foals have never been in can help get them to flag, raise their tail and generally have a more powerful movement.

Your Tools—Can/plastic bottles with rocks, plastic bags, horse sound apps on your phone. Your helpers can use cans to shake in a steady beat to encourage a good trot. They can also be used to get attention for ears forward in a conformation photo. A good camera- cell phones tend to distort photos while digital cameras generally produce better quality and can capture motion clearer.

Stand Back—Be sure to stand several feet back and zoom in on the horse to keep the proportions accurate.

Crouch Down—Take the photo with your camera level with the foal's shoulder and aim straight at the foal.

Don'ts



Taken at sunset, bringing out the red in her hair, legs are blocked from view by the grass.



Taken with a cell phone, too close distorting the proportions, and looking down making him look smaller than he is. Poor lighting so no muscle definition.

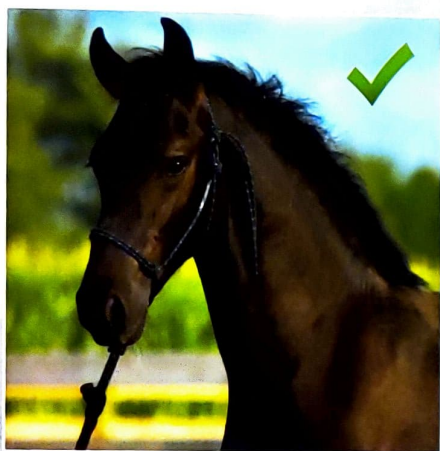


Taken with a cell phone, his head looks very big and his legs look bent at odd angles. The mares in the background are distracting.

Dos



A flat ground with no distractions to the eye showcases the collection in her trot. The lighting brings out her muscle tone and feminine features.



His ears are forward, the sun shining on his soft eye. Aiming at his shoulder, this shows off his long neck. The thin rope halter does not distract from his head.

Don'ts



While the movement is good, the back and foreground are very distracting. The foal also looks like she is going to hit a pole. She is going away from the light, losing her pretty face.



Taking photos in the winter tends to get you very fuzzy horses. Her hair hides most of her features and the camera is pointed at her eyes, and from the side, which also accentuates the long hair.

Choosing the Right Photos

You took your photos, trying to stick with the do's list and avoid the don'ts and it's time to choose the photos you want for your ad. Here are a few things to keep in mind.

How Many — FHANA suggests for their ads that you include 2-6 photos.

Breed Standard — Know the breed standards so you can choose photos that highlight the ways your foal conforms to those standards. You can find them on the KFPS website along with the most current linear score sheets.

Reputation — The photos of your foal represent not only you and your farm but the sire, dam, and their lineage as well. Photos that poorly represent your foal can impact how their siblings and sires are also viewed.

Avoid bias — Other things in the photo can also send a message to buyers. Not only can things like broken fences and controversial fencing types be distracting, but they can make some people think twice about the safety of the area. Many owners struggle with keeping their mare's body condition good while nursing, so if the mare looks out of shape, choose photos without her in them.

What's in a number? — Judges prefer to see foals at 3 months so make sure to take photos when your foal is not going through an awkward phase.

If you decide to hire a professional photographer, make sure they have experience photographing horses. All photos were taken by me and the "Dos" photos were taken with a Nikon D7200 camera and a 70-220 lens.

