

PRESENTING MARES AND FOALS

ATTIRE

To present a professional appearance, we recommend that the handler and any assistants wear solid color shirts with collars and long pants. Polo or golf shirts in red or navy (the traditional colors of Oldenburg) usually look best, although white or farm colors are also permissible. Pants should ideally be white or khaki. Shoes should be appropriate for running.

BRAIDING, CLIPPING, TACK, ETC.

If you are presenting a mare for inspection, treat her as though she were going to a show. Bathe, clip, braid, etc. Braid the mane. Some sites provide a professional braider, so if you don't want to do your own braiding, check with the inspection host about this service beforehand. Mares that have already been inspected do not have to be braided, but you should make sure they are clean and well groomed. Most breeders also braid their foal's manes. This is especially good advice if your foal has a really nice neck. If your foal's mane is too wispy to braid neatly, just leave it unbraided, but make sure you brush out any dirt or shavings. Many breeders also like to bang the tail on their foals. Don't worry if they are fuzzy or are starting to shed their foal coat and look a bit moth-eaten.

Your mare *must* be presented in a plain snaffle bridle. Make sure it is clean and in good condition. If your bridle has a flash, you can remove it if you wish. Foals and yearlings should be presented in a plain leather halter. If the foal is very young, you can use a foal slip halter, but the grab strap is sometimes a bit distracting. Some people use a leather lead shank for foals, but these are often too long and the chain too heavy for young foals. White cotton foal leads (not as thick as regular leads) usually work very well with foals.

PRESENTATION

After verification of papers is complete, the inspection committee will begin the actual evaluation of the horses. The usual sequence is mares without foals, then mares with foals (where both need to be inspected), followed by foals whose dams have already been inspected and approved. Each mare, or mare and foal combination, enters the ring one at a time. If presenting a foal, you should have one handler lead the mare and another one lead the foal.

If the mare who is accompanied by her foal has not yet been inspected and approved, the inspectors will evaluate her first. Walk the mare to the point of the triangle in front of the inspection jury and pose her in an open stance with her left side toward the jury. You should stand directly in front of the mare and attempt to keep her standing quietly while the inspectors take note of her color and markings, and evaluate her conformation. When the inspectors step in front of the mare to see her front, move slightly toward the horse's far side, then step back in front of her again when appropriate. The foal can stand nearby, but should not get in the way of the inspectors as they evaluate the mare. Once the mare has been inspected (or if the mare has already been inspected), her handler should hold her slightly off to the side while the foal is stood up at the point of the triangle. At this stage the judges will take note of the foal's color, and draw the markings and coat whirls of the foal on a special form. Markings will be in red ink and the whirls in black ink. The DNA samples from the mare and foal will also be taken at this time.

After evaluating the horse's conformation, the inspection jury will want to see its movement. For mares, the handler should walk the horse directly away from the inspectors and back again (back and forth). When so directed by the inspectors, the handler should **trot** the mare forward around the triangle in a clockwise direction. The horse will then need to be **walked** clockwise around the triangle and halt finally in front of the inspectors, once more putting the horse in an open stance. When walking and trotting away and back again, the handler should try to keep the horse straight and moving directly away from or toward the inspectors so they can evaluate the correctness of gaits.

If both the mare and foal need to be inspected, the inspectors will finish evaluating and scoring the conformation of the mare and foal before scoring the movement of the two. The mare's movement will be evaluated first as described in the previous paragraph, but the foal will be turned loose at this point and allowed to follow its dam. It's up to you as to whether you want to remove the foal's halter. If he is a demon to catch or you are not in an enclosed arena, you might want to leave the halter on. Some foals hate the halter though and spend the entire time they are in the ring shaking their heads, so if your baby is usually pretty good about being caught and haltered, take the halter off so it won't irritate him while he is loose.

The mare will be evaluated first, so she should be trotted and walked out to show off her own movement. To then present the foal, jog the mare around the triangle so the foal will follow at a trot where the speed will not cause him to lose his balance, but will allow him to trot out expressively. Only the foal is being evaluated at this time so the foal must be kept on the inside of the triangle toward the inspectors. Don't let it run behind the mare where they can't see it. There is a real art of presenting horses in hand, especially foals. The power of a loose foal should be respected, and the presentation should be taken seriously. The judges strongly suggest hiring a professional handler, and recommend that the owner help the handler to keep the attention of the foal in the arena.

For both mares and foals, the handler should endeavor to show the horse's trot to their best advantage. Animated and lively is far better than super quiet and dull, your horses will NOT be penalized by the inspectors for showing some spark! If you need to wake your horses up a little bit to get them moving, have someone run behind them and shake a lunge whip with a plastic grocery bag

tied to it. If doing this scares the horse too much, lightly shaking a plastic bottle with rocks in it can also be helpful. This usually works very well, but be sure you are ready for it and don't get run over. If your mare breaks to a canter or gets really rowdy, give a tug on the reins, *but do not stop* as she might run past you and you will be right in the firing range if she decides to kick out. Slow down momentarily until she is back to a nice trot rhythm, and then speed up again if you need to. Remember the inspectors are looking for swing, impulsion and elasticity here, so you really want your horses to trot out boldly. If the inspectors feel that the horse has a better trot than it showed they will sometimes allow you to go around again, if time permits.

After the jury has finished evaluating the foal, the mare handler should bring the mare to a halt while the foal handler catches the foal. The handlers should then walk the horses over to stand in front of the inspectors once more as they announce their comments about each horse and advise which mare book the mare as been placed in. All foals out of Main Mare Book Mares must return later to walk in-hand around the arena with their dams in a group so the inspectors can see them all together, and name the Premium Award and Foal of Distinction winners. Only foals of Main Mare Book mares are eligible for the Premium award. All Oldenburg foals are eligible for the Foal of Distinction award, and it will be up to the judging committee to ask certain foals to join the group for this final evaluation at a walk.

DNA TESTING

The Oldenburg Horse Breeders' Society requires parentage verification via DNA analysis before they will issue foal registration papers. The inspectors will pull some mane hairs from your mare and foal at the inspection. Only DNA samples taken by the inspectors will be accepted. These will be sent off to the testing lab at U.C. Davis to be validated against the stallion's DNA (all approved and activated Oldenburg stallions in the US have their DNA records on file). Once the foal's parentage has been validated by U.C. Davis, the registry will issue the foal's registration (pink) papers from the German Office. This entire process may take 3-5 months or so, so don't be worried if you don't have your papers immediately. U.C. Davis handles DNA testing for many other registries and they get swamped during the summer and fall.

MICROCHIPPING

The inspectors will issue a microchip to each foal. It will be stapled to the Owner's copy (the yellow sheet) of the Foal Inspection Form. The code number embedded in this microchip is recorded on the foal registration form and becomes a permanent part of the horse's registration record. Occasionally, the inspectors will run out of microchips while on tour, so it will be sent from the Society office to your home if this is the case. Microchipping is an important tool for positive identification of the horse throughout its entire life. The chip is the size of a grain of rice and is implanted in the foal's neck using a special syringe like device. We suggest that this procedure be performed by a qualified veterinarian.

GETTING HELP

Don't be shy about asking the site host for help or advice. Most of our inspection organizers have done this many times and are happy to help as best they can. If you think you would like some assistance presenting your horses, ask the host beforehand if they will have a professional handler available. Also be sure to *thank* your site host afterwards. Our inspection hosts put a tremendous amount of effort into organizing/hosting inspections, and they will really welcome a few words of appreciation.