



Horse Breeders' Society

North American Division of Verband der Züchter des Oldenburger Pferdes
150 Hammocks Drive, West Palm Beach, FL 33413. Phone 561-969-0709, Fax 561-969-0064
Oldenburg@oldenburghorse.com

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 only her mane though, not the tail (you can clip the undersides of the dock or pull the hairs if you wish). 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. Foals should not be body-clipped. 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 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 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. 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.

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 mare before turning their attention to the foal. When the inspectors indicate, the foal handler should turn the foal loose. 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. Once the foal is free, jog the mare around the triangle again so the foal will follow at a trot. Only the foal is being evaluated at this time. Try to adjust your speed with the mare to get a good trot out of the foal. If it is just sauntering along, speed up a bit and see if you can get it to really trot out (without taking off at a dead run!). Also be sure to keep the foal 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, so if you are unsure about your own abilities in this area, check with your inspection host about the availability of hiring a professional handler.

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. 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 decided to kick out. Slow down momentarily until she is back to a nice trot rhythm, 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. Foals that are named as premium candidates must return later in a group with the other premium candidates (after individual evaluations are over) so the inspectors can name the actual Premium Award winners. Only foals of Main Mare Book mares are eligible for premium awards.

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. 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 as it is inspected. 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. 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 easily implanted in the foal's neck using a special syringe like device brought to the inspectors or mailed to you at a later date. When administered correctly, there is very little pain or trauma associated with this procedure, and the foal will never notice its presence.

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.