



Photographing your Horse

With Julie Wilson

Once you have decided to sell your horse, the next step is to prepare an advertisement, which in the majority of cases will include at least one photograph. If you are not lucky enough to have access to a professional photographer, you may decide to take the photo yourself. I have been asked to provide a few simple tips to make this task easier. Ideally you will need three people, one to hold the horse, another to attract the horse's attention and position its legs and one person to take the photo. Before you start, all three people should know what is trying to be achieved. Have a look at other ads and show them to your helpers. Pick a flat piece of ground, with a clean background and the sun behind the photographer and allow yourself plenty of time.

Any sort of camera is suitable to take a stood up photograph, but it is important that the photographer knows how to use the camera before they start. If you are using a digital camera, take some test shots of a person standing where you plan to stand the horse. Check they are well lit, do not have poles coming out of their head and that you are standing where you get both their head and feet in the shot and then mark this spot. If you organise these things before the horse arrives it will make the task a lot easier.

Once you have taken your photographs, an excellent and free program for editing your images can be downloaded from <http://picasa.google.com/>



Head Photographs

Unless you have a good camera it is very difficult to get really good photos of your horse's head without distorting the image. A good full body shot is what most prospective buyers are looking for.



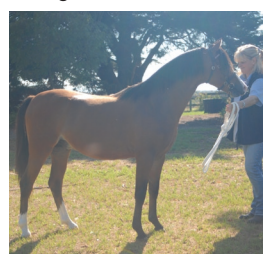
Centre of Attention

Make sure your horse takes up most of the photo. Most cameras will expose the picture to the dominant colour, the more sky you have the darker the horse will be.



Avoid Front On

Try not to photograph your horse's head directly from the front, the camera tends to distort the image, making the smallest head look large.



Lighting

When photographing make sure the sun is behind you. This "milky" effect is called flare and is caused by shooting into the sun.



Background

A bad background can really distract from a good photo. When you find a nice place, note what time of day it is best lit from the sun and plan to photograph at that time. However try and avoid mid-day, as you may get too many shadows.

Classic Stood Up Photograph

To achieve the classic stood up photo the horse should be photographed from the near side, so you can see all four legs, with the near fore and the off hind slightly in advance of the other legs. The ground needs to be flat and ideally the background plain or contrasting to the horses colour. To achieve the best results, the photographer needs to stand at the horses shoulder and the horse needs to look slightly to the left so you can just see both ears. The cannon bones of the near side legs need to be at right angles to the ground, ie straight up and down. A common fault is to have the front legs under the horse and the back legs too far back.



Image Quality

Most cameras will give you a good quality image if you have them on the correct settings. Fill the frame with the image and avoid using the digital zoom (an optical zoom does not lessen quality). Images from video cameras are usually of poor quality.



Wide Angle Lens

Most cameras come with a wide angle lens which gives poor results when photographing horses. To try and avoid this problem stand further back and then crop the photo later, the closer you get the more distortion.



Exposure

Before you start, do some tests to make sure you have the camera on the correct settings. Computers can fix a number of faults, however the better exposed the photo, the better the results will be.



Head Collar

This is a good head photograph but spoiled by a very plain head collar. If you do not own a leather halter or a nice bridle try and borrow one the day before you want to do the photos and make sure it fits well.



Handler

To make the horse look its best it is ideal to have the handler out of the photo, however this is not always possible and it is better to have a good photo of the horse with a handler than a bad photo without.



Who is the Biggest?

With wide angle lens the object closest to the camera will look the biggest, so make sure your horse is standing in front of you and not at an angle. Try and make the horse fill your frame.



Cropping

If you are doing a full body shot, do some tests before you stand the horse up, to make sure you are getting both his feet and ears in the photo and mark the spot where you need to stand.