

Photo Contest Tips for Better Pictures

Professional equine photographer and judge of the 2007 Horse Illustrated photo contest offers photo contest advice.

By Sharon P. Fibelkorn

The first step in any contest is to understand the rules and comply in order to actually get in the running. It has been said that most entries never make it into a contest because people fail to follow the directions. Now, I don't know if that's true with the 2007 Horse Illustrated photo contest because the entries I saw were all very nice with the correct information. With that said, let's begin our journey into the world of taking pictures and entering contests.

A Little History

When photography finally appeared in Western industrialized society, let's say around 1839, it arrived to fill the cultural and sociological need for a more accurate and real-looking representation of life. Up until then the world was blessed with great (and not so great) painters, whose view of things was very idealized.

Let's also keep in mind that photography is an art form that we are all capable of performing, just like painting, singing and dancing. Photography not only gives us a way to document our lives, but also to express ourselves. And just like any art form, some of us do it better than others.

On To The Show!

So now, what will the judge really be looking for?

1. Always read and follow the contest directions.
2. Think about the theme of the contest and how your picture will fit that theme.
3. Watch your focus – tack sharp will usually win over fuzzy every time.
4. Watch your film grain and exposure. Less grain and good light is best.
5. Watch your pixels. More is always better and will be sharper.
6. Clean, beautiful backgrounds get high marks – look for the best place you can shoot.
7. Know your equipment. Taking a 'snapshot' isn't the same as consciously 'making' a picture. So read your manual and learn about your camera.
8. Go have fun! Photography is your chance to explore your world and to give you memories that will last a lifetime in print. I swear to this because even as a professional who takes countless photos, I keep each one and I treasure them all equally.

Get more photo tips from Bob Langrish.

Enter the 2009 Horse Illustrated Photo Contest.