

Is Your Yearling a Longeline Candidate?

Tips to ready your horse for a show.

By Dale Rudin

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The yearling Longeline class provides a showcase for up-and-coming English and western pleasure horses and an opportunity for the owners of these young horses to participate in horse show events. In order to compete successfully, these immature horses must demonstrate a calm and willing attitude, trainability at a young age and quality of gait.

When considering a Longeline prospect, observe the young horse as he moves freely across the pen or arena. Do his gaits remain steady with a natural cadence, or does he tend to pick up speed or want to play excessively? While traveling at each gait, does he lift his knees and hocks up toward his body, or does he reach through from his hips and shoulders with a long, low and fluid stride? Does he have natural eye appeal, or is his personality lackluster and his expression plain?

Proper training and preparation of the youngster is as important as his natural talents. Follow these tips and guidelines to help ready your yearling for shows:

1. Consult your veterinarian in order to tailor a program that will provide the necessary training and level of fitness without putting excessive strain on immature legs and joints.
2. Plan training sessions at a time when your yearling will be the most quiet and receptive, i.e. after a long turn-out or when activity around the barn is minimal.
3. Use a round-pen to help the young horse remain focused on his handler and to develop natural gaits.
4. On the longeline, avoid excessive pulling to protect the yearling from becoming unbalanced and causing possible injury.
5. Haul the inexperienced horse to shows whenever possible to introduce him to the sights, sounds and smells of the show grounds before he has to deal with the pressure of performing.

With desirable attributes and solid training, your yearling Longeline competitor can be a great success, and that success can continue throughout his career under saddle.

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