

# Advertising Your Horse

## Part 1

by Brett Shear-Heyman

Buying and selling horses is a complicated aspect of the industry that every member of the community experiences at some point. There are agents, buyers, sellers, owners, investors, riders and parents involved; all of whom have different interests. But despite all the frustrations there are successes; and those are the stories to be told, and methods to live by when it comes to selling your horse. Since moving to southeastern Pennsylvania in 1996, Courtney Cooper, an upper level event rider, has carved out a niche for herself in the industry by specializing in consignment and making successful horse and rider matches. Having sold almost 200 horses in the past 6 years, Cooper has many tips and words of wisdom to share from her experiences.

In Part 1 of this two-part series, Cooper will guide you through the process of advertising your horse. Tune in next issue, as she covers what to do when a potential buyer comes out to meet your horse.

Cooper spoke of selling horses with confidence as she shared her expertise. The success, according to Cooper, starts with good advertising. She was not just speaking about good exposure and volume in advertising, but more importantly realism and honesty. "When writing an ad, for the Internet, be direct about what your horse is and is not." Cooper said. While potential is exciting and important, advertise your horse for exactly what its talents are at that time, but if you think your horse has upper level potential, don't be afraid to say so.

In order to accurately assess your horse for his personal ad, Cooper suggests tapping into community resources. "Get another person to watch and evaluate your horse so you are not misguided when writing your ad." she said. It could be a respected friend, instructor or other professional.

Many sellers make videos and use photographs to help advertise their horses and while they are useful tools, Cooper has advice: If you make a video, it need not be ten minutes long and more often than not you can post it on websites like Youtube or on your sales site. "I have dealt with customers who wanted the conformation shot, the walking towards

and away from the camera, etc, but unless the horse is extremely expensive or the customer is coming from a very long way away, that is extensive and often unnecessary." she said. Make a short video with a minimum of flat work. Show lead changes each direction, if that is something you advertise as a skill, and the same goes for jumping or dressage talents. Show what you advertise in a brief exercise. Most importantly Cooper stressed the need for releases from professional photographers and videographers, as well as a need for quality. "Poor quality is more of a liability than an asset."

When a potential buyer contacts you about your horse, Cooper's methods of realistic advertising do not stop. "I like to find out what they are looking for in terms of the basics; age, sex, experience, price, size and potential," Cooper said. While the buyer knows what they are looking for, you know your horses best. Your ad may have given them enough information to make a call or send an email, but Cooper said there is usually more to it than that. "It is important to answer their questions about your horse but make sure you ask your questions as well," she said. "You may be able to save a lot of time and frustration if you can identify a mismatch before someone makes the trip to come see your horse."

Beyond identifying whether the horse is a potential match or not, Cooper mentioned the need for direct contact with a few important individuals. If there is a professional involved Cooper likes to deal with them directly, even if they were not the first contact. "A lot of the time the professional will have a very good and sometimes very different idea of the kind of horse they want for their customer." Cooper said.

If the potential for sale is still present after these conversations, Cooper has guidelines for setting up the trial. Look for Part 2 in the next issue, when Cooper will take you step-by-step through the process of showing your horse to a potential buyer.

For more information about Courtney and C Square Farm (Nottingham, Pennsylvania), visit her web site [www.csquarefarm.com](http://www.csquarefarm.com).