

TIPS: PHOTOGRAPHY WITH YOUR HORSE

By Linda Finstad

COMPOSITION

Because horses are so large, it's necessary to get back at least 15 or 20 feet to prevent distortion, and a camera with a telephoto lens is a great help. Otherwise, keep your distance, and enlarge the prints if necessary. If you get too close, and say it's a head-on shot, the animal's nose and face will be huge, and the rest of the body will appear quite small.

NATURAL FRAMING

Unless you are taking a registration photograph, try to avoid standing your horse up against a plain barn wall. Instead look for places around the yard that will create a natural frame - like an overhanging tree or position your horse in a gate way, even long grass can be used to frame and add interest to your pictures. Pictures of horses in bright yellow canola fields always look stunning – Be sure to ask permission from the farmer first.

TIME OF DAY

I often get asked what time of day is best for equine photography. My simple answer is anytime that the sun is shining. Sunshine adds contour and texture to a horses coat and muscles, giving your final picture a three dimensional appearance. In harsh sunlight a black horse will gleam and look stunning. Dull overcast skies produce dull flat pictures and your black horse will just look like a blob on the page with no definition to his form.

There is also something know to photographers as the “Golden Hour”, this is the time just before sunset - not necessarily an hour, this very special lighting might only last for 10 to 15 minutes, just as the sun goes down your photographs will take on a beautiful golden glow. This is especially beautiful in the fall, as the autumn tones in the leaves will be enhanced.

BEST ANGLE

On all shots, either have your camera level to, or slightly lower than the horse (you may have to kneel down). Do NOT take pictures where the animal is on lower ground than you are, it makes his legs look short, and his back will not look good! It's just an unattractive view.

Make sure your horse is standing on level ground and not with his front feet in a dip, as this will affect his top line. If you have to make a choice on uneven ground, always place your horse so he is standing uphill rather than downhill - he will look taller and more imposing.



ACTION SHOTS

To capture crisp sharp photographs of moving horses you need to have a fast shutter speed and lots of light. Trying to capture action shots in an indoor arena is notoriously hard (even for the Pro's) as there usually is just not enough light to allow your camera to obtain a fast enough shutter speed. A little bit of pre planning will give you the best chance of capturing the action. You need to make sure you are in the right place and anticipate the right time to click the shutter.

Fortunately for the photographer, most people don't go over a jump just one time, if you hang out in the warm up area you will see trainers with their students practicing over the same fence several times, giving you plenty of chances to get "The shot".

This is also true of most equestrian sports – there is always a pre competition warm up time. This is the place for budding equine photographers to hone their skills.

HERE IS A GREAT TIP!

If you are unsure where the best place around the arena is to take your shot from - go and stand near the Show Photographer – She knows all the best angles.

A WORD OF CAUTION - Please stay safe and don't get in anyone's way, the collecting area can be a dangerous place.

