



Formula for Ethical Profit

Written by Susan Kayne (pictured with Desenfrenado)

When discussing pedigree, I'm often drawn into the larger subject of breeding as a whole. My personal philosophy is to conscientiously breed the most correct and durable thoroughbreds possible, because longevity creates ethical profit.

However, on the business side of horse-racing, some owners are looking for a quick turnover on their investment, rather than love of the horse or respect for the sport; meanwhile, breeding fast, fragile-boned babies gives no thought to their future or the reliability of any offspring they might produce. This is not to say that being business-oriented implies carelessness in the industry--on the contrary, breeding big, solid, sound horses will ultimately reward the owner far and above both financially and ethically than any one-race wonder ever could. Without strength and soundness, a horse will not likely make it past its 3 y.o. year, and miss out on the many opportunities older horses have in their division to win large stakes race purses.

On international tracks, it is much more common to see 5 and 6 y.o. thoroughbreds who have been bred and raised to acclimate to the pressures of racing through strong bone structure, size, and correct conformation. However in American racing, all too often young horses are retired from racing after one big win for the sake of recouping expenses in the short-term.

What does that mean for the thoroughbred? The best scenarios are all too rare; many beautiful animals that worked tirelessly for their owners are simply led to slaughter when there is no profit to be made from them. A perfect example of this kind of brutality is the recent tragedy caused by trainer Ernie Paragallo, who allowed the starvation and neglect of 177 thoroughbreds, many of which were valuable, prize-winning horses in recent years, on his New York farm. To me, the real question is, how many horses have been neglected or slaughtered that don't make it to the news?

As a part of the industry, I am appalled at the trend of these kind of practices. This is why I approach breeding, owning, and managing racehorses with the greatest degree of care and humane treatment as possible, and this process begins with pedigree and conformation.

A legacy of successful lineage is of course, the best place to start when getting involved with breeding, but taking a hard look at the physique and attitude of a potential stud is also important.

Without practically flawless conformation, I personally will not consider breeding to any thoroughbred no matter what the hype is surrounding him. He needs to be big, durable, and sound of body and mind. I am not looking for a baby who might win a race or two early in his career, but rather, an athlete made for endurance and stamina that will provide consistency I can bank on over time. (Catienus pictured right)





Broodmares should also be selected with lineage and conformation in mind, and if timing allows, taking a look at her skills as mother is helpful. Some mares are more attentive and protective than others, so choosing one with intelligence, a good attitude, and excellent care for her babies is practically like buying another form of insurance on your potential foal.

(Pictured: Austin Runner & 2009 Ten Most Wanted colt)

If and when you decide to get involved with the exciting process of thoroughbred breeding, think about the future of the horse you aim to bring into the world. Protect that future by making smart decisions about pedigree that will carry your colt or filly firmly through his or her career and beyond. It will prove rewarding in every sense!

Things to Remember:

--After studying up on the lineage of potential studs and the history of their careers, take visits to as many farms as necessary to really get a solid grasp on what your options are; looking at conformation and attitude should be critical in finalizing your decision!

--Take a stand on humane measures within the industry by being an example. The higher the quality and durability of the thoroughbreds you produce, the more you are advocating for positive change. Overpopulation benefits no horse and no person within racing, so choose wisely and carefully.

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