



## Four Things You Should Consider Before Breeding Your Mare

**B**reeding season is just around the corner! It is an exciting time of year as many of you will become consumed with finding the perfect stallion for your mare, anticipating foals to come, and dreaming of the future. As a stallion owner and mare owner, I'd like to remind you of four things you should consider before breeding your mare.

**#1:** What are you looking for in a stallion? Every stallion should have certain qualities and characteristics when breeding mares. If you are planning on breeding your mare, consider conformation, mind, trainability, feet, and bone. While a show record can be important, it certainly shouldn't be the only factor in choosing a stallion. Color can be important to some, but again, remember that a good horse has no specific color. Consider the conformation of your mare and that of the stallions you like. Do they complement each other? Look at pictures and video if possible. Will your mare's temperament mesh with the disposition of the stallion? Call the stallion owner and ask what their stallion's disposition is like. Ask trainers, farriers, and others that may have possibly been around the stallion. While choosing a stallion is important, keep an objective mind when deciding to breed your mare as well. If you have an ill minded mare, know that she will spend the most time developing your foal. The goal of any good breeder is to better the breed, not simply raise foals.

**#2:** What is the condition and age of your mare? If you are planning on breeding

your mare in the spring, get to know the body condition score chart. Mares that are too fat can be extremely hard to get in foal, as well as mares that are too thin. Your mare should be a healthy weight (body score of around 6) and free of any illness or diseases. Age can also be an important factor in breeding your mare. Maiden mares can sometimes be a challenge to get in foal. If you have an older mare that is also a maiden mare, it can be even more difficult. It is always a good idea to visit with your vet and make sure your mare is an appropriate age and condition to breed.

**#3:** What is your budget? Plan ahead and have a budget. Nature does not always

cooperate with our plans. It is not hard to end up spending more than you hoped to get your mare in foal. However, if you plan and account for a few added expenses; you will not be disappointed if you have an issue along the way. Mares do not always cooperate and stallions have good and bad days too. Ask your Veterinarian about performing a breeding soundness exam on your mare. It adds a little to the cost, but is worth it if you find she has an infection and can treat it before you breed. If you choose to ship semen, make sure you talk with your Veterinarian and have an idea of what it is going to cost to breed your mare. Make sure you understand the number of ultrasounds required, any shots that will be necessary, the fee to AI, and don't forget about the cost to return the box the semen came in! If for some reason your mares does not settle on the first shipment, be informed on how much it will cost to ship semen again. Should you choose to have your mare live covered, make sure you understand how many times she will be bred and what your mare care charges will total. The stud fee can be a small percentage of the expense when it comes to getting your mare in foal. Communication with the stallion owner and your Veterinarian is of utmost importance.

**#4:** Perhaps the most important thing you can think about is; what are your plans for your new foal? Are you breeding for a show prospect, ranch horse, barrel horse, rope horse, or trail horse? Or do you hope to have a foal that can work a cow, ride out across a pasture, lope like a reiner, but will still pack the kids? Be specific in your breeding goals. If you hope to raise a foal that will perform well in a specific equine sport that part of the industry is where you need to look for the right stallion. Versatility is quickly becoming a thing of the past, so if that is what you desire, you'll need to look for a stallion that meets the requirements of what you deem is versatile. It is important to have a plan as to what you will do with the foal. A responsible breeder realizes their foal could live for 30 years! It is always a good idea to have money set aside as your foal grows for hay, feed, and training should your life change. With an industry flooded with horses, make sure you have a plan. Consider looking into the AQHA Full Circle program where you can help make sure you are contacted should the horse you raised ever become unwanted or need assistance. Go to: <http://www.aqha.com/fullcircle> for more information.

Breeding your mare and bringing a foal into the world can be a complex, yet very rewarding adventure. Breeding horses is not for the faint of heart. Knowing the type of stallion you want to breed to, the budget you have to get your mare in foal, and having a long term goal for your foal will make your adventure that much more rewarding.



Lisa Johnson is the owner of 2008 AQHA Palomino Stallion Jake Jacspin. She operates the Equine Reproductive side of DAZZLE Family Farm located in south-central Kansas. Find out more about Jake and Lisa at: [www.jakejacspin.com](http://www.jakejacspin.com)