



Training and Preparing the Business and Delivery Horse for Showing

Presented by:
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Southern Cross Nickolas (Shire)

Champion Delivery Horse in a Traditional Vehicle

Sydney Royal 2017 & 2018

Training - How often and for how long each time?

Long reining or in vehicle or both?

- Training starts when they are born.....
- Heavier breeds are usually broken in older, that is about 4-6 years old because of the later growth and heavy bones/body.
- We have a “preparation” for individuals with an aim for a particular show. New to training horses will only get light work a couple times a week, and then daily when we are just prior to a show with the appropriate vehicle.
- Horses need to be fit to show, not just fat. To show off their best they need muscle and to feel good and be competent at what they are doing.
- Long reining is a good tool to start with, but the big horses need more than a round yard to work in. Long drives in harness on quiet roads with some relaxed driving and some hard driving. Not necessarily fast, but, controlled and asking an effort. Also asking for various movements that maybe required in a workout for example standing, rein back and a fan maybe. But covering ground in an eased way because of breeding, ability, training and most of all confidence in the surroundings and trust in the driver.

Activities practiced - eg different paces, standing, rein back, fan (for heavies), flexing correctly, driving straight line and workouts.

How do you teach a horse to stand?

- We begin training mainly on long drives. During a drive we start to practice the various things that will be asked for in the ring and at the show. Flexing and bending as we drive for example plus responsive to rein and voice.
- Standing is a very early lesson and needs to be reinforced every time there is contact with the horse. In hand, in long reins and in harness. Even at the float.
- A large flat arena is a big asset or travel to your local showground for a practice a few times. This will also help your packing and tie down skills. Separation from the horses mates is also to be considered, as “herd animals” they need to get used to being out on their own, floated and stabled on their own!! Are you getting the picture?
- Don't wait till show day to try something unfamiliar....
- Have lots of help on hand, even if its only someone staying at the stables to watch your gear. If you have to be on your own, be very organised.

How do you introduce a new young horse to the show atmosphere for the first time?

- Horses are usually taken out with other horses so they are able to hear and see another horse in a vehicle coming towards them, behind them and beside them.
- We do take the horses to other events such as a driven dressage day again to give them exposure to other horses, different noises, dressage letters and the arena. Showing and Dressage are two disciplines that really do work well together.
- First show we try to pick a “horse only show” or a quieter show, close to home and no stabling. Most of our horses also do led classes on the day so this gives them exposure to the ring, noise etc before the harness classes start.
- Have lots of help on hand and stay calm!!!



“Peg” (French/English Percheron) in a Bakers Cart at 2021 Sydney Royal



“Southern Cross Princess Royal” (North American Percheron) driven in a Show Cart at 2021 Sydney Royal



“Southern Cross Hamish” (Shire) in the Long Shaft Breaking In Gig class at 2021 Sydney Royal



“Southern Cross Hamish and Southern Cross Nickolas” (both Shires) Four-Wheeled Turnout Team of Two Heavy Horses at 2021 Sydney Royal

Feed - do individual horses have their own feed mix to suit workload and temperament?

- Our base feed is the same feed for all horses but quantity is based on workload, some horses have their own feed mix in addition to the base feeds.
- All horses receive additives such as biotin, vitamins and minerals.
- Access to pasture and water.
- For the show, pack what they are used to and plenty of access to water.
- Balance feed with exercise and what is available in the paddock.

*Stabling/rugging -
Are show horses
stabled and/or
rugged?*

*For how long before
a show?*

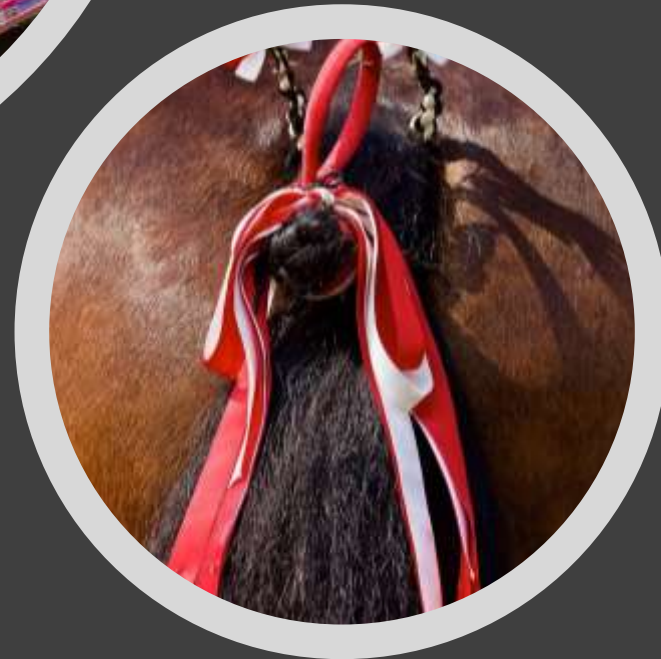
- Our show horses are rugged all year around, making adjustments to the weather conditions of the day/season. They do have some rug free hours mainly in the warmer months. A good fit is essential!!
- Horses are usually stabled the night before a show, also dependent on weather leading up to show and if they are stabled normally.
- Big horses need plenty of room. Confinement usually bottles their energy for good and bad. It has to let go somewhere.....led walks at the show can help for familiarity and exercise.



Horse's coat - How do you achieve a good show coat?

How do you prepare mane, tail, feathers?

- Brush, brush and brush
- The correct feeding helps with a good coat, feed the inside correctly and the outside will shine.
- Our shows horses are washed after each drive/workout and are shampooed once a week.
- Our horses have clean rugs once a week.
- Know the specific plaiting and trimming for the breeds. For example who wears a tail fan, who has loose tails, who needs to be plaited full on. Research your breed and practice at home. Co-ordinate your colours with your vehicle and outfits.



Teeth/Bits - What do you do if a horse is unhappy in it mouth?



Do you have bits/nosebands to suit individual horses?

- Teeth are probably the most neglected part of the horse maintenance and yet so important.
- Horses need a dental check every year, this might be twice a year if horse is younger and their teeth are changing.
- Each of our horses have their own bit, we mainly use a variety of Liverpool bits such as straight bar, arch mouth and we also use butterfly bits. Wilson snaffle, Buxton bits and many others are also suitable.
- Don't be talked into using an unsuitable bit just for tradition sake. Some old "traditional" bits are very severe and unnecessary. Listen to your horse and train them accordingly.
- The best bit is the one the horse performs best in!
- Nosebands need to fit correctly and help keep winkers in place, not keep the horses mouth shut! That needs to be taught earlier.





Hooves/Shoes - How do you look after hooves? Any special shoeing tips?

How do you present for a show?

- Clean out hooves before every drive, you never know what you might find, you can learn a lot from the underside of a hoof.
- Our horses are feed “Hoofpep” which has a large amount of Biotin ingredient which helps with mane, tail and hoof growth and maintenance.
- Our horses are shod every six weeks, every second shoeing is hot shoeing with new shoes.
- Depending on breed of horse they have their hooves painted black, some other breeds are natural so have a clear coat painted on their hooves.
- Depending on the breed, there are also different types of shoes eg square fronts for Percheron.