

Nancy Guthrie Pierce Tips for a Successful Photo Shoot

You've decided to spend the money for professional photos that will help you sell, market, or just show off your horses, you've researched equine photographers to find one with a style, skill level, and customer service record that you like, and your photo shoot date is fast approaching - what to do NOW?

Fortunately, there are a few simple things that a horse owner can do to provide for a successful and - even fun - photo shoot. Here's a list of "must do's" that will help your photographer get the best, most flattering, most productive photos of your horse(s):

DO . . .

1. Arrange for a suitable area in which to photograph your horse. While it would be nice, most of us don't have a beautifully landscaped farm in which to place our horses for photos. If you do - super! If you don't - no worries! A medium sized paddock works well for liberty (loose) shots. Move the farm equipment or any other distracting objects from around the paddock before the day of the shoot. For in-hand shots, any area with trees or greenery works for me. Give me flowers and/or mountains, and I will be in "photographer's heaven"!
2. Arrange in advance to have 2 or 3 "helpers" on hand to get ears and to perform any other crazy tasks a photographer might need to get the best looks from your horse. This is VERY important.
3. Make your photo shoot a priority. If your photographer wants to shoot early or late (and it will likely be one of the two to catch the best light), please make arrangements for you and your help to be ready at those times.
4. Keep your horse contained (in a stall is preferable, but a very small paddock will do in a pinch) for at least 24 hours before the shoot. I prefer a horse to be stalled for 2 days prior, but

DO NOT . . .

- ...attempt to conduct a photoshoot with only yourself to handle the horse and the photographer to photograph the horse. DOES NOT WORK!
- ...wait until your photographer arrives to start cleaning and grooming your horse(s). This is common courtesy.
- ...expect miracles from your photographer. No matter how talented or skilled your photographer is, making him or her shoot a dirty horse in an area with trash or farm equipment as the backdrop is a waste of your money and your photographer's time - the resulting photos are not going to send the message that you want to send - which is, "My horse is worth your consideration".
- ...try to control the photoshoot. Let your photographer be the one to tell you and your helpers what he/she wants you to do. Unless you are psychic or have worked with a particular photographer so much that you understand his/her methods, do not shout instructions to the rest of the crew. Let the photographer guide you all.

that sometimes just isn't practical. Horses left out in the pasture prior to the shoot will not typically have the energy and "spark" necessary to get the best photos.

5. Clean up your horse(s) prior to the shoot. It is up to you as to whether you want to clip your horses or not, but your horse should at least have a bath and be brushed thoroughly (including mane, tail, and forelock) before your photographer arrives.

6. Have payment ready for your photographer the day of the shoot (or before) unless prior arrangements have been made between the two of you.

7. Relax and enjoy the creative process! Do follow your photographer's instructions (even when you may not quite understand the logic behind them!), and if you have ideas or suggestions for a particular shot, feel free to share them politely with your photographer.

...put oil or grease in your horse's forelock, mane, or tail. This "do not" is a personal rule of mine, and other photographer's may have their own personal preferences. I like manes and tails to be able to fly in the wind whenever possible.

...expect your photographer to photograph your horses in the middle of the day - unless it is overcast. The optimum times for photographing horses are the early morning hours and the later afternoon/evening hours.

GOOD "PROPS" TO HAVE ON HAND (it isn't necessary to have all of these, but two or three of them will help with your shoot):

- ~ 2 or 3 large BLACK (not white, not grey) trash bags
- ~ a cheap umbrella
- ~ a large tarp big enough to completely cover a human
- ~ a mirror large enough for a horse to see himself in it
- ~ a motorized remote control toy car or truck
- ~ a smile and a positive attitude