



## **SUCCESSFUL HORSE VIDEOGRAPHY**

by Ben Johnson, BenThere Media

A quality video can be an important tool in promoting your farm, stallion, and sales horses. They can capture the attention of your audience like no other medium. A video can show your horses movement and disposition much more effectively than a photo.

Potential clients love videos because it makes their buying process so much easier. They can consider horses in the comfort of their home, and only travel to visit the ones they are serious about considering. This can save you much time by not presenting horses to people with only a casual interest in buying.

The client serious about buying a horse, or booking a stud, will often be watching several videos in one sitting. Not only should your video present your horse at it's best, it should also capture the viewers attention. Too often I have seen videos that are so badly done, I can only watch a few minutes of them. The well produced video will not only be watched all they way through, but will likely be watched several times. The more your video is watched, the more serious your client will become about purchasing.

### **Considering a professional.**

There's a lot that goes into an effective horse video. Hiring a professional, or accomplished amateur, to produce your video can save time and money, make life easier for you, and produce a better product in the end. Some options to consider are local student with an interest in video, local event videographers, and professionals who specialize in equine video production.

A professional producer should be able to help you craft your video to suit your specific needs. Rates can vary widely, and are often dependant on the amount of time that is needed to complete the video. This includes planning time up front, travel to and from your location, time spent shooting and editing the video, and costs for duplicating the final video. Many professionals will offer packages with discounts if you are flexible on scheduling, and if you want to take a "hands off" approach to the production. You can also usually negotiate discounts if you have multiple horses that you need videos for.

Ask to see samples of recent work, also known as a "demo reel." This will give you a feel for the videographers style, quality, and production values. Always be sure to ask about music, and if licensed music is included in the price. A professional producer should have access to a wide range of music that can be used in your video without worrying about copyright considerations.

Also worth considering is who owns the final product. Some videographers will contract that they own the final video, as well as all raw footage. This can tie you to their rates for

any copies that you need. Others will allow you full ownership of the production, which means you can copy it as you please.

Duplication is an important consideration when planning a video marketing campaign. Consider how many copies, also called “dubs,” are included with your video package. Typically, pricing is based on how many copies you order at the same time. Make sure that any duplication includes professional labeling and packaging. Some professionals also offer a distribution service – you send them the names and addresses of who needs a video, and they do the rest. This can be a valuable service for those who need to send out many videos, or who don’t want to keep videos sitting on the shelf. A professional video producer should be able to offer most of these services, or be able to refer you to a reputable service provider who can.

Another option is putting your video online for the internet. Costs are usually the same as copying and sending out 2 or 3 video tapes. Clients get instant gratification, and can easily pass on the video link to their friends. The challenges are not everybody has a fast enough internet connection to easily watch your video. It’s difficult to know who has seen your video, and to provide a personal follow up call to them. There is also a very large tradeoff between video quality and download speed – the faster the download, the lower the quality. Internet video is a good option for those who already have a strong internet presence and website, and who can incorporate an online video into their internet marketing plan.

DVDs are becoming a very popular option. They can offer a lower cost of duplication, lower shipping costs, and much higher video quality than VHS tapes. DVDs also offer many more creative options than a VHS tape. If you have several horses for sale, you can put them all on the same DVD, and your clients can use a menu to select the one they are interested in. This can save you a lot of time and money, because you only need to stock and send out one DVD. You can also include menus to show bloodlines, still photos, and extra footage of your horse. The possibilities are almost endless!

DVDs are also a great option for larger farms that sell more than 5 or 6 horses per year. The DVD can start with a short video introducing the farm, and then transition to a menu with the current offerings. Most video professionals will be willing to commit to a discounted, long term contract to produce new videos for your horses as they come and go, and keep your DVD up to date with the horses you have.

The DVD is also a great marketing tool for horse shows. They don’t need to be re-wound like a VHS tape, so they can play non-stop at your stalls. The DVD can also be programmed to randomly play your horse videos, so the programming doesn’t appear to be repetitive. A professional video producer will either have the tools to do this, or be able to refer you to somebody that can.

When considering professional video services, you do get what you pay for. A professional videographer not only has a very large investment in equipment, but also a large investment in time and training. Producing a professional video for your horse or farm isn’t an expense, but rather an investment in your marketing program. A quality video can sell your horse faster, and at a higher price. That can mean big savings to you

in board and feeding expense. It's also an investment in your image as a professional horseperson. A professional video tells clients that you are serious about horses as a business, that you take pride in your horses, and that you are willing to do what it takes to show them at their best.

If you are planning on making your video on your own, here are a few tips to make a better video:

- 1) Use a tripod. This is the single most important factor contributing to a successful video. Without a tripod your video will be shaky and hard to watch. No matter how steady you think your hand is, it will not be as good as a solid tripod. Zooming will accentuate the shakiness in your hand, so if you cannot use a tripod, avoid zooming in. Make sure your tripod is level, or else the horizon or fence lines will be tilted and look unnatural. If your tripod has an adjustable center column, do not use it. The tripod relies on simple geometry to be effective (3 points make a plane,) and raising a center column breaks that rule and will make the camera less steady.
- 2) Shoot in the middle of the day. While mornings and evenings can produce dramatic images, the light will not present your horse in an even fashion. Light around noon time will show your horses movement and conformation better. Always shoot with the sun at your back.
- 3) Present your horse at its best. Treat your video the same as if you were presenting your horse at a show. Your horse should be bathed and well groomed, and presented in appropriate tack and attire. This not only shows your horse at their best, it reflects on your professionalism as well.
- 4) Edit if you can. Most people's attention span, especially when looking at multiple sales tapes, will be less than 10 minutes, and often less than 5. Edit together your best shots showing your horses movement and conformation, and any special skills your horse has. If you cannot edit your tape, get your horse WELL warmed up before shooting, then shoot the best 5-10 minutes of their workout.
- 5) Music. Music not only makes your video more enjoyable, but also sets the mood and helps tell the story of your horse. Music can help show off your horses movement or gaits. Be aware that you need permission to use music on your horse video, just as you would for a musical freestyle. Using music without permission is theft, and is illegal. You never know – you may be sending your video to the person who owns the music you are using illegally!
- 6) Labeling and Contact Information. If you have the ability to put graphics and text into your video, be sure to include your contact information at the end of the video, and the name, breed, and age of the horse both at the beginning and the end. Label your videotapes both on the face (top) and spine with the horses name, breed, and your phone number or website. If you are sending out DVDs or CD-ROMs, DO NOT USE PAPER STICK ON LABELS. Not only can these damage some players, they can also make your disk unstable and unwatchable.

- 7) Duplication. Make sure that YOU keep the original copy of your video. Your copies should be made off the original to keep the quality high. Use quality tape stock and DVD blanks to keep quality high, and ensure compatibility with the widest range of players. Consider having your tapes professionally duplicated – this can save a lot of money, even if you are making as few as 10 tapes. Look for a local service provider in the yellow pages – they can also add professional labels and packaging options.
  - 8) Shipping. Send your tapes and DVDs in appropriate mailers, or with appropriate protection. Don't just send the tape. If somebody has requested a tape from you, it means not only are they interested in your horse, they are also interested in you! Send along a copy of your current sales, or a copy of your current ad.
  - 9) Follow up. Ask your prospective clients if they received the tape, and had a chance to watch it. Ask them if they saw everything they wanted to see in it. If they are not interested, kindly ask them to return the tape. Some people will ask for a deposit before sending out a tape. While this can save you some money in the short term, it can hurt your marketing program in the long run. Advertising is an investment, and not just in what you have to sell right now. A quality video says as much about the horse as it does about you and your farm. People who have contacted you for a video are expressing a direct interest in your horse and your farm. Capitalize on their willingness to be a captive audience for your video message. And just because they don't buy the horse in your video, it doesn't mean they won't pass it on to a friend, or refer other people to you based on your professionalism.
  - 10) Tell a story and have fun! Each horse has its own personality, and your video should tell their story. Show off any tricks your horse has, or just show a little bit of your horse being loved on. You're not just selling a horse, you're selling a companion.
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Ben Johnson is owner of BenThere Media, a provider of professional broadcast engineering services and equine video production in Washington, DC and Charlottesville, VA. Ben has 7+ years of network experience, and has been producing videos since 1988. He has received multiple awards for his work, and is a member of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers, and the Vice-President of the Association of Washington Executive Broadcast Engineers. He can be contacted at [Ben@BenThere.com](mailto:Ben@BenThere.com) or [www.benthere.com](http://www.benthere.com)