

NOTES TO ASSIST WITH YEARLING PREP.

Preparing thoroughbred yearlings for sale can be a daunting task. The following notes are from one of Australia's most experienced and respected stud managers, and are provided as a guide to those people looking for assistance in this highly demanding role.

An ideal time period for yearling preparation from paddock to sale ring in 8–9 weeks.

WEEK 1:

Bring the yearlings into boxes

Spend the first week working around your yearlings in the boxes, they are usually a little uptight for a few days.

Teach them to tie up. Clip your lead to a piece of string in case they go off and pull back, so they don't hurt themselves.

Spend approximately half an hour to start with brushing them all over, manes and tails and picking their feet out. Introduce them to a curry comb.

During the first week is a good time to fit a light cotton rug, and before you leave them, put a bridle on with a straight bar bit and mouthing keys, and this on for around 2 hours a day for the first week.

You can put them out in a day yard on their own, allowing them to graze with the bit in for an hour or so, once they have become accustomed to it. You may notice they lose weight in the first week or so, but they will soon put it on again once they have settled in.

WEEK 2:

Your yearlings should be shod in front only. They should be ready to go on the walking machine, or to have a light lunge if you don't have a walker. If using a walker, give them 20 minutes at a good walk (this equates to around 2 kilometres).

If you are lunging, start with only 3 to 4 minutes each way, then take them for a good 15 minutes hand walking in a level paddock.

Either way, use this time to also introduce them to the wash bay, where you can spend time hosing them down, over their bodies, between their legs etc. Scrape off and dress over with a body brush, brush out mane and tail, put out in their yard to dry off and graze (with their bits in).

If you have time in the afternoon then put them on the walker again for 20 minutes while you do their boxes etc, bring back in, put their rug on and feed (around 4.30pm).

It is very important not to let young horses get bored in their boxes. Try tying-up an empty 2 litre plastic milk bottle for them to play with, and give them 3 feeds per day. Last thing at night, give them a small hay net of good quality hay and have a radio on nearby.

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WEEK 3:

The yearlings should be used to their routine by now and starting to come into shape. If you are not happy with their coats, speak to your nutritionist who will advise you of various products you can use.

Increase their time on the walker by a few minutes each week now up to a maximum of 40 minutes in the morning and 25 minutes in the afternoon. If you are lunging step up their time by a couple of minutes extra per week, but NOT exceeding 15 minutes in total, making sure this is split up in going both ways. Step up their feed program and start to spend more time hand walking them.

It is important to teach them to lead up well. Use a cane or a short whip so they walk upside – a good walking yearling always catches the buyers eye at the sales.

WEEK 4:

Yearlings should start to look well physically and their coats should be starting to bloom. It is now just a matter of keeping the exercised and content. Now is a good time to start teaching them to stand up in the correct fashion for showing at the sales. This also includes standing in one position for a period of time, as they will be required to do.

Continue to be regimental with their routine and exercise.

Manes should be pulled and tails trimmed up. If you are not competent at this yourself, have it done by a professional, you only get one chance at them.

Your yearling(s) should now be well handled enough, and used to have its legs and feet picked up, so that your vet can perform the 42 x-rays required by the sales companies. This requires a fair amount of time and patience, but it has to be done.

WEEK 5 ONWARDS:

From now until you depart for the sales, it is a matter of continuing with your exercise program (both in the lunging ring and on the walker).

Commence in the mornings with around 8 minutes lunging, then hose off, dress over and put on the walker for 25 minutes. This will tighten up your yearling nicely over the next couple of weeks. If you have time, then hand walk for a lap or two with your cane.

Get any photos done for any advertising you may want to do.

Yearlings should have their hind shoes put on around one week before they depart for the sales.

Depart around one week prior to when they are to be sold, this allows a few days to settle in and get used to their new surroundings.

There will be many inspections by buyers, who are generally there to find fault with your yearling, so don't give them a chance. Have them well

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presented each time they come out of the box and show them off for all their best attributes.

Remember to always thank the potential buyer after each inspection.

In summary, everyone has a different way of preparing yearlings, and what has been outlined here is intended as a guide only.

Feeding of the yearling during preparation has hardly been touched on in this article. The best advice is to consult with someone who has had experience with yearling sales, or get your nutritionist to call out frequently if you are unsure.