

To Breed or Not To Breed?

J.M. Shuffitt

Marion County Extension Service
University of Florida/IFAS, Ocala, FL

Few things in this world are more awe inspiring than watching a broodmare give birth. The anticipated foal, which began as an idea of mating just the right sire and dam bloodlines, will represent not only his ancestry but also the knowledge and skill of his breeders, owners and trainers.

However, the decision to breed your mare should not be taken lightly. There are many considerations that need to be taken into account before making the commitment to breed your mare and raise the resulting foal. Following are some of the questions that you will need to answer.

The number one question to answer is. . .
Why do I want to breed this mare?

“Because she’s a mare.”
“I want to make some money.”
“It’s less expensive than buying a foal.”
“She’s my first . . . only . . . favorite mare.”
“I can get a free . . . reduced stud fee.”
“My mare has won tons of blue ribbons.”

Next, look at your mare **objectively**

How’s her conformation?
What kind of disposition does she have?
How’s her health?
Does she have any allergies?
Does she have sound feet and legs?
Does she colic frequently?
Is it difficult to keep her in good condition?

Now take a look at her **bloodlines**. Are they traceable? What do you know about her ancestry?

How are your **finances**? Some of the things you will have to pay for include: stud fee, transportation costs, standard medical care, additional or emergency medical care, increased feed costs, boarding fee, foaling fee, etc.

Consider other **risk**. Your mare could abort. The foal could die. You could lose both the mare and foal.

What about the **sire**? Evaluate his conformation, temperament, performance records, and bloodlines the same as you did your mare.

Consider the **contract**. Is it a “live foal” or “no guarantee” contract? If “live foal”, what definition is used? What’s included? When is payment due? What do you have to do and/or provide? Get help if you don’t understand!

Finally, **have your mare ready**. Does she have a current Coggins? Is she up to date on her vaccinations and deworming? Has she had a breeding soundness exam (BSE)?