

The Business of TCS

An Excerpt from *Shipped Semen 101*

by Judith Pilgrim



Judith Pilgrim presents the business basics of adding transported cooled semen (TCS) to your stallion's breeding program

Advantages of Artificial Insemination

Artificial insemination is the preferred method of breeding on numerous farms. There are many reasons for incorporating AI into your own breeding program. Most importantly, AI protects the stallion, mare, and stallion handler from accidental injuries that can occur when hand breeding mares. It reduces the risk of introducing infections to both the stallion and mare. It reduces the risk of illness or injury to the mare's newborn foal, especially if the mare is being rebred on foal heat. It allows the breeding farm to breed more than one mare per collection. And lastly, AI allows the breeder to ship transported cooled semen.

The goal of breeding with TCS is to produce beautiful foals from mares spared the stress of transportation to the breeding farm and of separation from their familiar surroundings.

Business Procedures

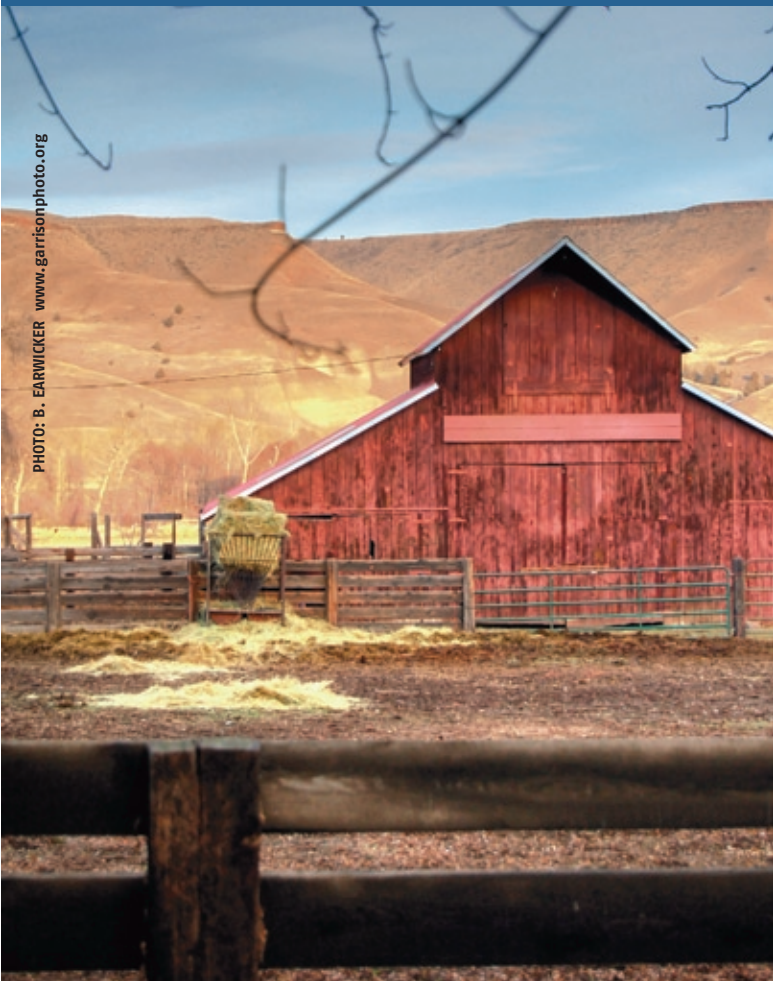
If you thumb through any AQHA or APHA journal or go online and search stallion websites, you quickly realize that the competition for the breeding dollar is fierce. There are some business procedures that you need to have in place before you advertise your stallion.

1. **It is essential that you have an e-mail account;** a website is nice, but not necessary. Most of your customers will want to be able to contact you via e-mail. (Do not respond to the customers in all capital letters. According to email etiquette, all caps is like shouting to your customer. Use correct punctuation and spell-check your letters before sending them.)
2. **Contact FedEx and establish an account** with them for shipping your containers. They provide, free of charge, shipping labels with tracking numbers and special handling tags. You need a supply of these before you begin the breeding season.
3. It is nice to be able to **offer a one-day shipping service** to your customers. Contact at least one airline to make your farm eligible for one-day, counter-to-counter shipping. Since 9/11 this is a much more complicated process, but



it generally costs only about \$50 for the security inspection of your farm. American Airlines calls this cargo shipping account a PAL account. It takes four to six weeks to establish a PAL account with American Airlines.

4. **Develop a breeding contract.** Go online and review the contracts of different farms to use as a guide for your own contract.
5. **Develop a packet of breeding information** for your customers. I sent one to everyone who expressed an interest in our stallion. I put it together in a pocket folder that has an address label on the front with our ranch name, address, e-mail and website. On one side I have a letter to the mare owner that includes some general information about our program, our shipping history, and a thank-you for their interest in our stallion. Behind the mare owner's letter I have an expanded pedigree of our stallion, two signed copies of the breeding contract (one for the customer and one for me), and a self addressed envelope for contract return. The other side of the folder has an 8 by 10 color photo of the stallion that is also a flyer with all of his stats on it (I place this photo in various places of business that allow such advertising).
6. **Set up a set of books for each breeding season.** There are very nice bookkeeping software programs you can purchase, but I find it just as easy to keep my accounts in a three-ring binder. I use dividers and alphabetize my customers. I developed my own billing sheet, and it was an inexpensive but effective billing method. *Note: Our stud fee did not include the shipping expenses. If your customer does not have a FedEx account to charge the shipping expenses to, you will have to pay those expenses and re-bill them to your customers. I pay for each shipment when I take it to FedEx and receive a copy of the shipping label that includes the cost of shipping. When I bill the customer, I include a photocopy of the FedEx receipt with their bill.*
7. Eventually, you may want to **invest in a free-standing, plain-paper fax machine and a tabletop black-and-white copier.** I find these to be very useful in my business. I bought the Canon PC940 copier and the Sharp UX-510A free-standing plain-paper fax. Both are easy to operate and use regular photocopy paper I purchase by the ream.



When you commit to standing a stallion, you double your workload.

- Always insure your semen shipments** for the amount of the stud fee plus any collection and container fees. **Very important:** On rare occasions shipments get lost and, of course, then you miss the mare's cycle. Some of your customers' dissatisfaction with this will be eased when you return to them the insurance check from the carrier.
- Do I have to tell you to be nice? To be courteous? To be conscientious? To be customer oriented?** I shouldn't have to, but I am constantly amazed by the horror stories I hear from my customers who have had unpleasant dealings with other stallion owners in the past. So do be nice to your customers; be courteous in your conversations and in your e-mails; be conscientious with your paperwork, correspondence, and collection procedures; and be customer oriented—or don't start a service business.

The goal of a good breeding program is to ship high-quality semen to satisfied customers. The best advertisement in the industry is through veterinarians or breeding technicians praising the quality of the semen they have received from your farm. Mare owners also want to be treated courteously. Never forget that word spreads quickly in this industry and that you want this word to be good.

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- Maintain contact with your customers** either by phone or e-mail and answer any questions promptly. Most of us have other jobs besides the farm, and no one likes to hear the excuse, "I have to work, so I didn't..." When you commit to standing a stallion, you double your workload. There were many nights when my husband and I did not leave the barn until 11:30p.m., but we still had to get up the next morning and teach our biology classes.
- Always give your customer the FedEx tracking number**—or the flight number and arrival time of the airline—for their shipment of semen so it can be tracked.

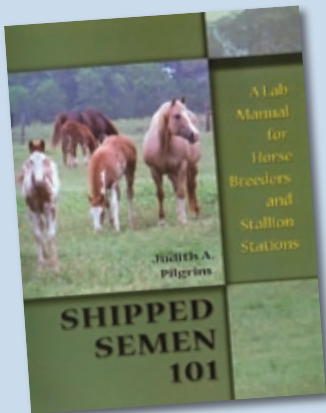
About the Author

Judith Pilgrim was a professor of pre-medical and pre-veterinary biology at the college level for 32 years, and has bred and shown horses and stood a very successful paint stallion for more than a decade.

She is available for speaking engagements, workshops and seminars on artificial insemination, collecting and shipping cooled semen, setting up an equine breeding laboratory, etc.

For further information visit Judith's website at www.twinoakshorseranch.com.

Below: Spring at Twin Oaks Horse Ranch



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