

# On the Plus Side + To Breed or Not To Breed?

By Allison Trimble - Coastal Equine Performance Horses

**After reading this thorough breakdown of expenses, you will be in a better position to make an informed decision about breeding your mare to get that foal you want**

*This edition of the Northwest Horse Source marks the first anniversary of On the Plus Side. It has been a great year and I hope that I have been able to provide some information that will help enrich your horse life.*

It's the time of year in the horse industry when our focus is entirely on breeding season. This is the foundation of the performance horse industry, for without careful planning and execution at this stage, there are no quality horses for the trainers to show. Every superstar was once just a twinkle in the eye of some mare owner. Without the breeding industry there would be no market for the superior mares and stallions after they were through with their show careers. But is this the part of the industry that is right for you? Sure babies are cute – I have a barn full of them myself – but what are the real costs for getting that baby on the ground and then to a marketable age? I think that you will find the cost benefit analysis interesting.

## § Mare Expenses

**Mare Expenses:** In most cases you already are the proud owner of this particular horse and have been feeding her, or showing her, for many years. Not including a purchase price for the mare, I generally figure it will cost me about \$750 per year for feed, \$175 for trims, \$35 for wormer, and \$60 for vaccinations. This is in a perfect world where horses never are injured, sick or destructive. I don't live in that world so I estimate at least \$200 per year for Veterinary expenses. If your mare is in a stall you can estimate another \$500 for bedding and stall supplies.

**Estimated Mare Expenses \$1720 per year**

## § Stallion Expenses

With today's extensive variety of impressive stallions, you can buy a breeding for anywhere from \$1000 to \$20,000. This is the easiest part of the equation because it isn't variable; it costs exactly what you pay for it. I will give you a small bit of advice here on cutting expenses: Many of the top stallions donate breedings to stallion auctions and it is very probable to get a stud fee for as much of 50% off the breeding fee. This is a great way to dramatically cut the costs of producing a baby. But, for our purposes we will go with a nice average breeding fee of \$2000.

**Estimated Stallion Expenses: \$2,000**

## § Breeding Expenses

Most farms charge a fee for collecting the semen, processing it and packaging it for shipment. The amount of the fee varies from farm to farm but, on average, it is about \$150. On average it takes two breedings per conception, bringing the total cost of collection to \$300.

**Estimated Breeding Expenses: \$300**

## § Breeding Facility

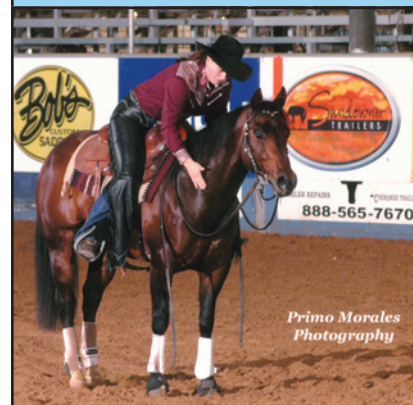
If you are not shipping semen, you are looking at sending your mare to a breeding facility to have her bred. You can estimate about \$10 per day for mare care adding up to about \$300 per month. You have to factor in here the cost of fuel to deliver your mare to and from the breeding farm. In many cases it is cheaper to leave her there until she is confirmed in foal. For argument's sake, let's assume we have to leave her for two months at a total cost of \$600.

**Estimated Mare Care Expenses: \$600**



**Allison Trimble** is involved in the performance horse industry on many levels. She is the National Reined Cowhorse Association Non Pro representative for the Northwest region and is on the board of directors for the Northwest Reined Cowhorse Association. She competes regularly as a non-pro in NRCHA, NRHA & AQHA events. Allison is owner of Coastal Equine in Ferndale, Washington, home of Cue Bars Laddie and Cow Cuttin Colonel.

Visit [www.coastalequine.com](http://www.coastalequine.com)



Primo Morales  
Photography

*continued on page 50*

### § Semen Transportation Costs

The semen will be shipped to you in an Equitainer or some similar, insulated container that you must purchase or rent. Add this to the FedEx Overnight shipping and your cost will be approximately \$75, or \$150 for two shipments.

**Estimated Semen Transportation Expenses: \$150**

### § Veterinary Expenses

Veterinary expenses add up quickly, particularly when you use shipped semen. To start things off, the mare must be cultured and undergo a breeding soundness examination. Then you begin a series of ultrasound procedures to monitor her ovulation. Follicle growth must be closely monitored so that semen can be

## “Sure babies are cute, but what are the real costs for getting that baby on the ground and then to a marketable age?”

ordered to arrive a few hours before ovulation occurs. It's a tricky business. Miss it by just a few hours and it's back to the starting blocks. She is inseminated and a series of ultrasounds are taken over a period of days and weeks to determine whether she is in foal. Let's say that the total cost of doing all this is \$400 for the two breedings that it will take to get her in foal.

**Estimated Veterinary Expenses: \$400**

### § Foal Expenses

Let's assume that it takes approximately the same amount of money per year to raise that foal as it does its mother. I will tell you from my personal experience that from the moment a horse is born, he spends his life trying to die. They are the most accident prone, high maintenance animals in this world and you are trying to get them through two whole years unscathed! By the time the foal becomes a two-year-old, he will have eaten, trimmed and vetted away no less than \$3440 of your hard earned money!

**Estimated Foal Expenses: \$3,440 (for two years)**

### § Total Estimated Expenses: \$8,010 to \$8,460\*

\* There are two options described – home breeding or sending the mare to a breeding facility. Home breeding negates the breeding facility expense, Sending the mare to a breeding facility negates the semen shipping expense. See sidebar.

In total you are looking at a breakeven point between \$8,010 and \$8,460, and this is in a perfect world! It is very easy to increase this amount by having colic surgery, foaling problems, or any number of other very common incidental expenses. All of this can be for naught if at any point you lose the foal. This is not including a purchase price for the mare, which can range realistically from \$5,000 to \$50,000. The average price for two-year-olds from stallions with stud fees of \$2000 ranges from \$5000 to \$10,000.

## Estimated Breeding Expenses: The Bottom Line

### Option 1 (Home breeding)

Mare Expenses	\$1,720
Stallion Expenses	\$2,000
Breeding Expenses	\$300
Semen Transport	\$150
Veterinary Expenses	\$400
Foal Expenses	\$3,440

**TOTAL \$8,010**

### Option 2 (Breeding Facility)

Mare Expenses	\$1,720
Stallion Expenses	\$2,000
Breeding Expenses	\$300
Breeding Facility	\$600
Veterinary Expenses	\$400
Foal Expenses	\$3,440

**TOTAL \$8,460**

As you can see, it is very true that it is hard to make money raising babies. Unless you are breeding a high-powered mare to a name brand stud, you will very possibly lose money on this endeavor. In the horse industry there is money to be made by producing babies, but it takes a lot of money, sound choices, planning and a lot of luck to make it all come together.

This is just a little bit of information that I hope you will find useful when you are trying to decide whether or not to breed your mare. There are a lot of rewarding reasons to raise colts, such as watching a new born colt take his first step, but keep in mind that profit may not always be one of them. **NWHS**

*I want to take this opportunity to ask all of my readers to drop me an email at coastalequine@aol.com with questions, comments or suggestions. I want to make sure that I am providing information that is helpful to you. You may also submit a question or comment at www.nwhorsesource.com on my "Ask the Expert" page. - Allison*