

Editor's Note: Bob Helms of Eleven Bar East Ranch in Sanford, N.C., is a recognized industry leader who has proven ideas and methods about how to achieve success in the horse industry.

It's as Basic as Bloodlines

By Robert F. "Bob" Helms II
Special Contributor to Horse Central

In the premier edition of *Horse Central*, we discussed the Team required for a successful horse business plan. In this article, we examine market realities and the impact of these realities on our production of quality horses to survive. First the market reality check.

In my mind, there are no better sources of information on the horse market than Mike and Tim Jennings of Professional Auction Services. These two brothers made some extremely important observations in their discussion of the general conditions in the horse market in the first edition of *Horse Central* in the article "Economic Downturn Hits World Show Auction" but... "Demand for Show Quality Horses Continues to Rise."

Tim said "I would expect more dramatic changes coming in the next few years due to oversupply and weary investors." He went on the say "In general, the industry is oversupplied... This oversupply may last a little longer for the lack of a processing market."

This article also described "a growing polarization in the [horse] market due to the hurting economy. Entry-level bidders are leery of investing in such an unstable market. Breeders with unproven horses are less likely to have a sale. At the same time, demand for proven, show quality horses is rising among those who continue to buy despite a recession. The guy who used to... spend \$3,500 to \$4,000 on a horse and had an old gelding he used to be able to get \$500 for... well, now he

can't get anything. Now, if we're not broke and scared, we are scared. Throw in feed and hay prices doubling in the past year and you have a stressed market." I also would include fuel prices as a major variable contributing to the stressed market conditions.

In my first column, I said "Those of us in the horse business also have to accept that we are not part of a life essential market place. People have to eat, drive, pay utilities and pay their mortgages. They can cut some of the costs in these areas; but, in the end, they have to take care of them and other similar costs. However, most can cut costs on what they spend for horse related activities. In the current economic environment, the place of horse activities within the overall family budget can be a challenge."

These market realities are not what those of us in the business want to hear; but they are what they are and we have to understand them; they cannot be ignored. Bottom lines: over supply; rising costs to grow, train, maintain and use horses; fewer buyers; buyers market; proven quality will sell; little or no market value for the average horse who has not done anything but stand in the pasture.

There are also technological ad-



vances impacting the horse business. Foremost among these advances are the increasing acceptance, use and cost effectiveness of artificial insemination (AI) and the efficient shipping of semen over long distances. The use and efficiency of AI is making breeding from the most powerful stallions widely available. Embryo transplant may also have a significant impact on the industry in a few years.

It is obvious, even to the casual reader, that if we want to stay in the business, the production of good, sound horses that can be sold at a reasonable price is the only thing that makes business sense — and this plan, of course, starts with top bloodlines — bloodlines that will produce the type of prospects that meet customers' needs and expectations, both now and in the future. There are so many good bloodlines available it is absolutely essential to focus like a laser on proven lines and avoid chasing the latest fads.

Find the bloodline that supports your program and use that bloodline to build your business. For example, if you are in the cutting business, don't expect a roping bloodline horse to compete at the top level against top cutters. Conversely, you should not expect a Western Pleasure bloodline to compete at the top level against a horse with roping bloodlines. In addition to performance, the bloodlines you choose can have a significant impact on disposition, mannerisms, confirmation and durability. Do the research and choose your bloodline carefully.

At the Eleven Bar East, our business plan it to produce, grow, train, and deliver quality, versatile, foundation ranch horses and our bloodlines have been carefully chosen to support this business plan. The evidence of our achieving this goal is the performance of our horses during 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Loun Doctor is a 2000 black stallion whose pedigree includes Docs Prescription, Poco Bueno and Doc Bar. The AQHA open events in which he has competed and won points include heading, heeling, barrels, poles, working cow horses, calf roping, trails and performance halter. He has received the AQHA Performance Register of Merit, Open Superior awards for both heading and heeling and won the Region X Open All Around award in 2006, 2007 and 2008. His 2008 SCQHA awards include Champion Open All Around, Champion Aged Stallion, Champion All Age Heading and Champion Performance Halter Stallion. Loun Doctor's 2008 NCQHA accomplishments include Champion in Dally Team Roping Heeling, Barrel Racing, Pole Bending and Open Performance Stallions. He qualified for the 2008 AQHA World Championship Show in heading, heeling, barrels, and poles and has already qualified in heading and heeling for the 2009 World.

Loun Doctor makes my point about the need for durability. He has the ability to travel and compete week after week; he reminds me of the Energizer Bunny® that keeps on going, going and going. For example, he was in Sarasota Florida for two-and one-half weeks in late December and January competing every day in heading and heeling against some of the best horses and riders in the nation. Just recently he traveled 12 hours from Sanford, N.C., to Meridian, Miss., on Tuesday to compete Wednesday at the Dixie National and returned Thursday to North

Carolina. After "warming up" on a few steers Friday, he then made a 5 hour round trip Saturday to Statesville, N.C., to compete in a NCQHA event with two shows, winning heeling in one of the shows.



Top photo, performance awards prove that careful consideration of bloodlines does work. Middle photo, Loun Doctor. Below, Two Eyes Watchin.



This itinerary is not uncommon. The need for endurance in a horse is obvious. Make sure you include durability as a key factor in your research of bloodlines.

The Eleven Bar East bloodlines also features Two Eyes Watchin, a 1999 buckskin stallion, whose lineage includes Two Eyed Red Buck, Mr Baron Red and Two Eyed Jack.

Two Eyes Watchin is the 2007 AQHA Reserve World Performance Halter Champion. This success is another example of a team in action. We, at Eleven Bar East, qualified Two Eyes Watchin for the AQHA World, but also had the support of Buddy Laney, a world-class halter trainer, to prepare and show him. Again, knowing what we do, what we don't do and filling the gaps by including professionals as members of the team works.

Heat N Glo, a 2002 Palomino stallion, sired by Hollywood Heat out of Leo Night Glo, also will be participating in AQHA open competition. His schedule is about the same as described for Loun Doctor, and he is proving just as durable.

The progeny of Eleven Bar East brood mares and these stallions includes weanlings and yearlings, as well as 2-, 3- and 4-year-old horses. These horses represent a pipeline of quality horses now and in the future. For example, Two Lydia Jack, a 2004 mare sired by Two Eyes Watchin out of Lydia Joe Jack, is competing this year as a junior horse in heading and heeling and has already received an AQHA Performance Register of Merit.

IMA Fancy Dancer is a 2004 Palomino mare with Baron Red and Two ID Bartender bloodlines who is competing in heading and heeling.

The Eleven Bar East Team is committed to do our part to breed, raise, train and provide show quality horses with the bloodlines that will help our industry get through these difficult times. We look forward to Mike and Tim Jennings being able to make a wonderful report on market conditions and we have confidence this time is coming. We understand it doesn't just happen; that we have to work together to make it happen. And we welcome the support and partnership of the *Horse Central* in helping to make good things happen for the southern horseman. |HC|