

New Program Focuses on Sport-Horse Prospects

With a focus on three-year-olds, USDF's latest program aims to bridge the gap between the babies and the "big kids"

By Scott Hassler, Member, USDF Sport Horse Committee

The USDF is excited to announce the creation of the USDF Sport Horse Prospect Development Program presented by Dressage at Devon, USDF Education Partner.

The USDF Sport Horse Committee developed this program to fill a void between the USDF in-hand program for sport-horse prospects and the US Equestrian Federation's Young Horse program. The in-hand program is designed to spotlight youngsters under three years of age; the USEF Young Horse program, for four-, five-, and six-year-olds, is for the talented youngster performing under saddle. Both programs provide an avenue for showing the horses at these stages of life; more important, they have strong, established educational components to provide consistent, correct fundamentals to horses in these age groups as well as their owners and trainers. However, until now there was nothing to bridge the gap between the two programs. The USDF Sport Horse Prospect Development Program, which is aimed at three-year-old horses in their first year under saddle, is a dynamic solution to this problem.

The Sport Horse Prospect Development Program will consist of annual educational forums held at selected locations around the country, in the "pockets" of our sport-horse community that have a high density of sport-horse breeding, raising, and training. The program will officially launch with the first forum, hosted by the New England Dressage Association, at Apple Knoll Farm in Millis, MA, September 14-15.

The Sport Horse Prospect forums, which will be open to auditors and



NURTURING THE YOUNGSTER: *New program aims to develop sport-horse prospects. Scott Hassler assists wife Susanne with a young horse.*

selected participants, will provide education on various aspects of a critical phase of a sport-horse prospect's development: the first year under saddle. Discussions and demonstrations will focus on topics to include manners, fitness, changes in balance resulting from growth phases, proper handling, lungeing, equipment choices and options, and ultimately the training plan for the sport-horse prospect according to each individual's needs. The program's intent is to openly review each horse's current strengths and weaknesses and to outline a path forward to optimize a solid foundation.

This program creates a valuable opportunity for breeders, owners, and trainers to meet, to get to know one another, and to focus on this

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

important phase in producing our future sport horses. I am excited to be a part of this new program and invite all breeders, owners, and trainers of sport-horse prospects to attend.

To apply to participate or to register as an auditor for a forum, or for more information about the USDF Sport Horse Prospect Development Program, visit the USDF

website or contact the USDF office at shprospect@usdf.org or at (859) 971-2277. ▲

Scott Hassler is the USEF national dressage young-horse coach. Hassler Dressage is a supporting sponsor of the Sport Horse Prospect Development Program. Kristi Wysocki, the current USDF Sport Horse Committee chair, contributed to this article.

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