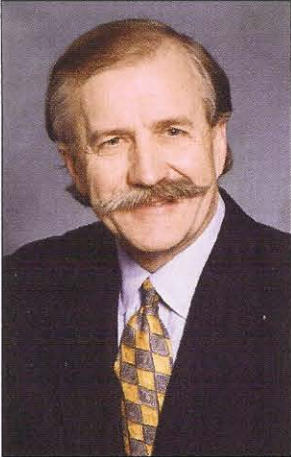


training disputes



By Mati Jarve
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I SOMETIMES GET INQUIRIES FROM OWNERS WHO SEND THEIR HORSES TO A trainer and are not satisfied with the results. To avoid frustration and disputes in the first place, I offer the following guidelines.

DO YOUR DUE DILIGENCE

When selecting a trainer, many owners choose a trainer with a big reputation who specializes in their area of interest. However it is just as important to select a trainer who is concerned about your horse's health, disposition and soundness. Visit the trainer's barn and check out the horses. Are they well fed and groomed? Do they appear well taken care of and healthy? Are they calm and quiet both in the stall and while they are being trained? You should make certain that the trainer has access to quality veterinary care and competent farrier services. Watch the trainer and his assistants working with the horses. Make sure that you feel comfortable with their training techniques and how the horses are handled. If you don't like what you see go to another trainer. Whoever you select, your trainer should be willing to talk with you and answer your questions.

COOPERATE WITH YOUR TRAINER

After you have selected a trainer you should have a frank and honest discussion about your horse's abilities and set realistic goals. For example, if you want your horse to win the national year end high point award in a particular class, you should ask your trainer for his honest assessment of your horse's abilities. If he tells you that your horse is not up to the task, ask him for a reasonable goal or alternative plan. Whatever goal is set, you should both commit to the plan of action and follow through. It is not a good idea to insist that a trainer accept an unrealistic goal that he knows cannot be accomplished. If and when the inevitable disappointment occurs there will undoubtedly be hard feelings on both sides. Avoid it from the beginning.

EVALUATE YOUR HORSE'S PROGRESS

Unless you are showing, or at least seeing your horse on a regular basis, you should ask your trainer for regular reports. Call the trainer every few weeks to find out how the horse is doing. Ask how your horse is progressing relative to the goals that were set. If the horse is not progressing as expected, find out why and what needs to be done. It may be necessary to adjust the training, or it may be necessary to adjust your goals with the horse. In either event, you should discuss with your trainer any additional time or expense involved in meeting your goal. Respect your trainer's opinion and advice. After all, he is the professional. Also, be realistic and honest in your evaluation of your horse's progress. Nevertheless, sometimes things just don't work out. If that occurs, the tough decision will need to be made---to change horses, or to change trainers. If that decision needs to be made, it should be done honestly, openly and professionally.

Mati Jarve is the managing partner of the Marlton, New Jersey law firm of Jarve & Kaplan, LLC. He is certified by the New Jersey Supreme Court as a Civil Trial Attorney and the National Board of Trial Attorneys as a Trial Advocate. Licensed in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Arizona, he maintains a national practice in civil litigation, including equine related issues. An original member of the American Farrier's Association, he occasionally still finds time to shoe his daughter, Kati's, show horses. Questions, comments or suggestions can be e-mailed to mjarve@nj-triallawyers.com, by visiting www.nj-triallawyers.com.