

Prepping is foremost...

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail" - Benjamin Franklin.

For most pinhookers and breeders, yearling preparation begins either when the hammer falls at the foal sales or when a foal is born. The Irish National Stud plan from the moment we take charge of a foal, backwards from the yearling sale date that has been identified as a goal for that individual. A balanced feed programme is one of the essential components, along with monthly farrier assessments and a detailed worming routine for each individual.

The Irish National Stud is spoiled for space; all our paddocks are well protected by heavy borders of beech, oak, ash and sycamore trees. The paddocks that suit yearlings best - fillies and colts - is now formulaic, tried and tested over the past hundred years. Yearlings require consistent access to balanced nutrients and minerals, making the Irish National Stud ideally located in the limestone - rich lands at Tully. Every effort is made to have a steady growth pattern throughout the winter months. A balanced feed programme, in tandem with the quality of forage available is essential for the development of bone which will support the massive strain put on limbs and joints in the future.

"Proof is in the eating". The most recent Champion to have navigated this familiar path at the Irish National Stud is Sea The Stars and now some of his foals have begun the same journey. Dermot Weld's talented daughter of Jeremy, Yellow Rosebud is another graduate of the Irish National Stud nursery.

As spring beckons, Stud Manager Annette Boland and our farrier take a close look at all yearlings, identifying possible weaknesses and watching eagerly for improvements.

Yearlings at this time of year will be taught how to show themselves, walking and turning with conviction and purpose. This is also when yearlings that have not been through a foal sale will learn to behave, how to stand while other yearlings and unfamiliar people are moving around them. A vital part of their preparation, as no matter how well a yearling is bred, it will only get a handful of opportunities to "show" correctly at sale time. One bad show can ultimately cost thousands, a couple of good shows and your yearling is popular.

With late April and early May comes the first summer grass and its rush of nutrients and minerals. Yearlings will usually change shape at this stage and joints and knees must be paid particular attention at this formative period. In early June yearlings that are slightly backward may begin to get some light walking in hand a few days a week, helping with bone growth and density as well as muscle condition. Sale preparation 'proper' will begin ten weeks in advance of the particular sale date; the usual mix of walking in hand, gentle lunging, time turned out, along with the consistent evaluation methods gives us plenty of time to rectify any small problems, splints or curbs.

With all that is required to produce a successful sales yearling, possibly the most important ingredient is our staff. Unrelenting and dedicated, our highly trained, on site experts are key to the process, nurturing your yearling along its path, and delivering a racehorse to the sales ring. The Irish National Stud have the best, our results on the track and in the sale ring say it all.

