

Is Junior Measuring Up?

Evaluating Junior's Potential

This article should be a lot of fun. We have many opportunities to hear clients describe the parents of the horse we are seeing. From their description, we enjoy guessing how tall and heavy the foal will be. And we are all guilty of overestimating the height and underestimating the weight of our horses. *Isn't it amazing how many values we apply to ourselves that we also apply to our horses?*

There are several parameters for predicting these values, and many can be made with actual measurements. Even without a measuring device, we can eyeball the horse's cannon bone and have a very good idea as to whether it will have exceptional height or be about average for the breed. We have charts for each of the general body types. From these you can find the average weight and height the foal of that breed should be for its age. Just call our office if you would like a copy.

The weight and height of the foals can be affected by more than just their parents. There are environmental effects, as well as maternal and birth order affects. These influence Junior's growth from birth to 18 months of age. After that age, they tend to blend in with others in the breed.

There are sexual influences which stay true for the life of the foal. With assisted reproductive techniques and careful selection of the recipient mare, the foal born as the result of embryo transfer can be born larger and stay larger than breed mates for the first year and a half of its life. *This is long enough to make an impact in the show ring!* Will the foal born to a large stallion and a small mare be the same size as the foal born to a small stallion and large mare?

The above summary helps us realize how many influences there are on the height and weight of our horses. What can we use to predict the future height and weight of Junior? As I mentioned, the cannon bone provides a great eyeball measurement for estimating the future height. *By the end of the first year of life, the cannon bone has reached its maximum length.*

The distance from the middle of the knee to the ground is 30% of the mature horse's wither height, and that measurement is one least effected by how the horse is fed and maintained. *There are formulas for relating the measurements of just about every bone to the ultimate height:*

- The head is 36 to 40% of the wither height,
- the elbow to the ground is 60%of the wither height,
- and the hock to the ground is 40%of the wither height.

In our next article we will discuss other factors that influence the size of our horses.