



[www.albertashowjumpers.com](http://www.albertashowjumpers.com)

For Albertans About Albertans

### 'Well Put Together'

By Shauna Cook

Spring is around the corner, or so we hope! I can't wait for the excitement of new foals on the ground – they are a culmination of almost a year's worth of daydreaming about the bloodlines and type cross. How will the foal turn out? Will it be everything I imagined? Did I make the right choice for my mare? All these questions spring to my mind the day I order the semen and drool over the photos of the daddy-to-be. For breeders, this is truly a passion.

Spring is also a great time to take stock of the young horses we have already produced and evaluate their development, keeping in mind there is no perfect horse! It is crucial to assess conformation and development to evaluate where the horse is strong and what weaknesses can be improved upon through training and/or other techniques.

I have three well presented young horses to evaluate. Kudos to their owners on the turn out and condition of these lovely young horses.

#### Young Horse # 1 - 2011 Gelding by VDL Jimtown



My first impression of this young horse (who was likely 2 ½ years old at the time of the photo) is the beautiful body condition and excellent muscle development for such a young horse. He is well-balanced and not your typical gangly youngster. His head has good expression, but what really impresses me is the well-developed muscling in his upper neck. His shoulder has a nice slope, which will allow a great reach in his stride, a smoother gait and good jumping technique. This horse's length of back is proportional and has a good connection to his loins. A good connection in the loins is vital for power in the canter stride and will allow the horse to open his hind legs more easily over the fences. His front limbs look to be straight and correct. His hind legs are well underneath him. If I was to be picky, the hind pasterns are slightly sloping which will make a comfortable ride but may allow for hyperextension. Horses with sloping hind pasterns are well served with supportive shoeing when in strenuous work. This is a fantastic young horse prospect and very exciting for the future!

#### Young Horse #2 - 2009 Gelding CWHBA



This horse is also beautifully presented with good expression. This horse, like the first horse, shows good muscling in the top line of the neck. His lower neck is nice and light which shows this young horse is being ridden in a correct round shape. This horse has a more upright shoulder. This will affect his length of stride. He is older than the first horse so we can see a more developed wither. His loin connection is higher than his back which may cause strain on his SI joint. He is standing with his hind legs camped out behind him which exaggerates the impression - we would like to see his hind leg underneath him to give him greater balance and power. He has nice straight, clean limbs (the right hind looks toed out but I think that is just the way he is standing). He has a lovely shiny coat and is in good health, but this horse would benefit from a greater body condition score. This will smooth out the angular look of his conformation.

#### Young Horse # 3 2009 Gelding by Con Spirito



Again we have a well-developed young horse in great condition. He also has a nice expression with a lovely kind eye. His neck is set on his body in the ideal uphill balance, but is more upright than the first two. This type of neck has the tendency to want to develop strength in the lower neck. Good riding, encouraging him to arch the top line of his neck and asking him to stretch down will help immensely. He is a sporty model and, although posing awkwardly, he has a good connection in his loins and a nice slope to his hip. This guy should have no trouble pushing his hind leg underneath him with power and impulsion. The slope of his shoulder is adequate. To compare, it is not as sloped as the first horse, but not as upright as the second.

Again no horse is perfect! It is important to be aware of your horse's strengths and weakness. This will dictate the type of job at which your horse will be successful, and also will help guide the training techniques used to strengthen the weaker areas. It is also imperative to remember that Grand Prix horses come in all shapes, sizes and flaws. It is what you and your horse do with it that will matter. A good work ethic and attitude (from horse AND rider) will often produce results no one expected!

Special thanks to Jennifer Stephenson, Tara Lamby and Beda Wachter/Grayton Farms for lending us your horses for this article!