



Model Horses *it's show time!*

This month, HW's Model Horse Columnist Temika Zimmerman has all the tips you'll need to create picture-perfect model horse photos for showing, competition entries or just some horsey holiday fun!

Hi HW fans! The aim of photo showing is to make the photo and your model look as 'real' as possible. Photo shows have a similar class list to a live model horse show, with classes for breed and colour, along with some fun classes such as progeny and liberty too! Let's look at the six parts to taking a good model horse photo – the model, background, footing/base, lighting, camera and props.

The model: Any size, colour and finish of model horse can be photographed. Keep in mind what classes you want to enter such as breed, colour, gender and of course fun classes. For breed and colour classes, it's best to photograph your model from side on (either side) to show your models conformation and colour the best you can. For fun classes, the angle isn't as important as it is for breed and colour classes, so you can experiment and find a new angle such as 'front on' or 'from behind'.

Temika's Tip: If your model has a scratch, rub or a mark, try photographing it from the other side to hide the flaw.

The background: A good background can turn an average photo into a winner! A background is usually a large poster printed on cardboard or paper (Just like the background included in this month's issue of HW! Ed) that you put behind your model; to give the illusion of your model being out in a field or even having a day at the beach. Backgrounds for traditional and classic scale models are usually A3+/A2 in size and A4 size for smaller scale models. Common background pictures include green fields, indoor arenas, farms or even the beach or desert.



When choosing a background, keep in mind what colour model you will be using with it. A simple way to make your model stand out is to think of

A good example of how a cool coloured background can make a warm coloured horse stand out.

the colour wheel (you've probably learnt about colours in your art class at school) and picking a background that is the opposite 'colour' of your model. Good examples include a background that is mostly blue for chestnut, palomino, buckskin and other warm coloured models, while green works really well for models that are grey, pinto or appaloosa in colour. If you can only have one or two backgrounds, it's best to stick to a versatile background such as a green field or a beach that will suit all kinds of different models.

Another thing to consider when picking a background is the picture itself and if any objects in the picture such as fences, barns or even trees are 'to scale'. You don't want your models looking oversized or out of proportion compared to the model you are photographing. The other thing to consider in your background is shadows. Try to pick a background that has a little shadow as possible, so you don't have to worry about trying to get

your model's shadow to match the background. You can even make your own background by printing photos you have taken yourself or use some computer wallpaper or wrapping paper. But make sure there's no writing on your background, as it will show up in your final photo. Try to print it out on matte cardboard (normal white cardboard) because glossy backgrounds will sometimes show shiny spots in your photo. In a good photo, the background is always a bit blurry or out of focus to give the illusion of distance. A good way to get this effect is to place the background at least one foot (30cms or 12 inches) away from your model. The further away the background is, the more the background will be out of focus.

Temika's Tip: Another alternative to a printed background is to go outside and use a natural background like your horse's paddock or your backyard. Using a natural background is much harder, as pretty much everything will be out of scale including the grass. If possible, try to take your photos on top of a hill that looks downwards – as this will help keep trees and other items in the picture be more in scale with your model.

Footing: Footing is the name given to the material your model stands on when you take your photo. Common types of footing include sand, grass mats and green scatter (you can get them from most hobby or toy shops that sell model train supplies). To pick your footing, you need to have chosen your background, so you can match the footing perfectly. For example, if your background is a green field, then use a grass mat or some green scatter on a piece of board that matches the colour of your background. Don't worry if you can't match it perfectly, as most paddocks have different shades of green. To help blend the footing into the background, you can use a fence or some branches or some green bushes to hide where the footing meets the background.

If your model has a base to help it stand, there are two ways to hide it. The first way is to cover it with sand or green scatter. It will take a lot of footing to cover the base of a traditional scale model. The other way is to get a grass mat and make a small hole, just big enough for the model's support leg to fit through. Some models have clear pegs for support and if you have too much footing, the peg can sink into the footing. A good way to fix this is by getting a small piece of cardboard and hiding in the footing, just below the surface, where the peg will be. If you have several backgrounds, bag up each different footing into a zip lock bag and label it, so you save money by not having to mix a new lot next time you want the matching background.



This black Overo Paint custom Stablemate etched by Temika, shows how you can take a good photo with just a model, background and footing.

Temika's Tip: If using a natural backdrop and real grass as your footing, get a pair of scissors and cut the grass down, so it doesn't look too high against your model. Other good forms of natural footing include sand, dirt and best of all, moss, as it makes perfect 'to scale' grass for your smaller models.

Lighting: Lighting is the one thing that will make or break a photo. If you don't have enough light, you can't see anything in the photo properly. If you have too much light, you will end with 'glare' spots on your model and background. There are two types of lighting used in model horse photography: natural light such as sunlight and artificial lights such as a lamp or spotlight. If you're just starting out, it's best to use natural lighting, as it's easier to work with. The best time to photograph will be late morning or early afternoon on a sunny day.

Try not to set your photo up directly outside in the sun, as the lighting will be too bright. Instead, put your photo set up underneath a veranda or carport or even by a large window, where you have strong but soft light. Don't have the sun directly behind you, as it will show up on your model and background and ruin your photo. Don't use a flash, as it will cast a shadow off your model onto the background. Instead, set your camera to



a setting such as natural light or simply turn the flash off. It might take a few goes to find the perfect spot to take

Example of a show photo background. Note how Temika has blu-tacked the background to a piece of wood and then added footing, tree props and the model. Note also the two lights on either side of the photo tent.

photos; so when you take some good photos, remember where you took your photo, what time of day and what the weather was doing. But there is one downside to photographing outside and that's the weather! Try not to photograph outside in even slightly breezy weather, as the wind can blow over your set up and you could risk damaging your model.

The other type of lighting to try is artificial lighting; which means you use lights instead of the sun to enhance your photo. Most people who use lights have bought special set ups that include a photo tent (which helps diffuse the lights so it's not focused on one spot), lights and sometimes some velvet material backgrounds. For the serious model enthusiast, artificial lighting has two big advantages over natural light. Firstly, you can photograph any time of day in any weather. Secondly, you can move the lights around to find the best way to light up your models.

It's best to have at least two lights (one for either side of the model) with 'daylight corrected' light bulbs if possible. Daylight corrected bulbs are special globes used by photographers that have a pure white light - very similar to strong sunlight. You can get daylight corrected bulbs from ebay, photography shops and some light shops. When using artificial light, turn off the flash or if your camera allows it, change the ISO setting to 200. Changing the ISO number allows for your take photos in lower light and still keep the sharpness, but as the shutter has to be open a little longer, it's best to use a tripod with your camera.

Temika's Tip: When photographing dark or glossy horses, it's best to use darker lighting, to avoid glare spots on the models. With glossy models, they are like a mirror and so will reflect whatever is around them. If possible, block out all windows in the room with dark curtains or blankets to avoid the windows

or other bright objects showing up in your horse's finish. It will take a lot of practice to learn how to use lighting correctly but when you master it, the hardest part of taking photos is over and the fun really begins!

Camera: The best cameras to use are digital cameras or a high quality film camera (not a disposable camera). Most digital cameras have a setting called Macro (or even a Flower setting) and this is the best setting to use and will make sure your model is sharp and not blurry. Digital cameras are really good for online model horse showing, as you can upload your photos and resize them on the computer and you can see if the photo worked before uploading to your computer. It's best to take several photos at the same angle just in case the first couple shots are blurry.

Temika's Tip: Most shows don't allow any editing/photo shopping of photos except for resizing. So make sure you get everything perfect before taking the photo. And don't forget to back up your photos in case your computer crashes!

Props: Props is the name given to objects you use in your 'set up' to make the photo more realistic. Common props include fences, arena walls, jumps, dressage markers, flower pots, bushes and branches. It's best to keep props to a minimum, as too many props can clutter your photo and distract the judge from your model. A good example of the correct use of props might be using an arena wall with some flower pots- or using a fence with some bushes at the base of the posts.

Temika's Tip: If your model is dark, use white or light coloured props and if your horses light coloured, use darker props such as a black or brown fence.

Let's go SHOW!

There are several types of photo show classes for model horses and heaps of model horse sites and clubs you can join on-line. Breed & colour classes are for showcasing a model's conformation and colour. Liberty classes are for models that are moving such as galloping or rearing. You can experiment with angles to get as much 'energy' into your photo as you can. Progeny classes are for a mare and foal, stallion and foal or even a stallion, mare and foal. The word foal doesn't mean the foal has to be a 'foal'; it can be an adult horse but still must be offspring of one of the models in the photo. Most shows have a headshot class, which is for photos of just your model's head and neck and not the body.

Performance photos are the hardest photos to take but they are also the most rewarding. Performance classes are usually arranged into 3 different groups: English for showjumping, dressage, hacking etc; Western for



Magestic Cavalier getting Reserve Grand Champion for Custom Breed.

western pleasure, reining and stock events and 'other performance', for things like Arabian costume, Parade and harness. Most shows will have a photo size limit of 400 pixels on the longest side and that's because most shows are held online in online photo albums. All shows will require you to name your horse but most will require you to have a stud prefix (makes identifying models easier) name for your horse and also colour, breed and gender information – eg. "PR High Voltage, Bay Welsh Cob Section D Stallion, Paradise Ridge Stud". Performance photos also require a sentence describing what your horse is doing - such as doing a 'piaffe at A' or approaching the next 'showjump'.

So are you ready to take some winning photos? Check out page 44 for details on our HorseWise Spring Model Horse Photo Competition, with some FANTASTIC BREYER prizes and HW blue ribbons up for grabs! Good luck!

Temika 😊