



LABELS

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'Tis the season for shipped semen. Throughout the country stallions are being collected for on-farm breeding, shipment of semen to the location of the mare, or for freezing. Some farms or clinics stand multiple stallions, whereas others may have a single stallion. Collection schedules vary with mare book size and management practices. A majority of Quarter Horse stallions with a large book of mares are collected on a routine basis, either every-other-day (i.e. even or odd days of the month), or on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday (and possibly Saturday) basis.

Breeding managers go to great efforts to promote or market their stallion(s), take pride in the way their stallions are housed, fed, groomed and handled, and are rightfully concerned about semen characteristics (especially sperm numbers and motility). The vast majority of farm personnel that collect, handle and process semen are well trained and efficient at their tasks.

However, with all the care and professionalism exhibited in other aspects of stallion management, it is surprising and a bit disconcerting when semen is shipped without any labels or any paperwork whatsoever. On the receiving end, it obviously makes one nervous to inseminate a mare with semen that arrived without clear identification as to the sperm donor (or date

collected). This is especially true when the stallion station collects and ships out semen from multiple stallions.

It should be mandatory that semen be appropriately labeled from the moment it is collected from the stallion until it is inseminated into a mare. This means labeling bags, bottles or graduated cylinders that may be placed in an incubator after collection and absolutely means labeling the bag, syringe or other container that is shipped to the mare. In addition, it is required that a Collection/Insemination Certificate provided by the AQHA accompany every semen shipment. The top portion of the Certificate is to be filled out by the person shipping the semen and identifies the stallion, intended mare and the date and time that the semen was collected. The bottom portion is completed by the person inseminating the mare.

Ultimately, each dose of semen should be labeled with the name of the stallion and the Collection/Insemination Certificate should be completed and included in the shipping container. In addition, many stallion stations will include a separate form which identifies the farm of origin, stallion, date and time semen was collected, sperm motility parameters when packaged, and other information (i.e. returning the shipping container, etc.). Motility parameters should

reflect actual data from the collection that is being shipped. It is not standard or recommended to preprint anticipated motility scores on a semen shipment form that is to be used throughout the breeding season.

A generally accepted equine breeding industry standard is to package one billion progressively motile spermatozoa per dose for cooling and subsequent shipment. It is anticipated that there will be some loss of motility or viability after cooled-transport, but the total number of progressively motile sperm will still be at least 500 million at the time of insemination.

The breeding season is long and sometimes challenging. Taking the time to do some of the little (and required) things can make it go smoother for everyone.