

Something to SHOUT About!

On April 3, Shout, the Quarter Horse foal introduced to readers in the last issue of *Equine*, definitely had something to shout about! Late that spring evening, another colt was born. And unfortunately, Higgins, as he was to be christened, entered this world in much the same way Shout did—that is, under star-crossed circumstances.

Like Shout, Higgins was malpositioned in the uterus. He too was flipped on his back. Unlike Shout's dam, Higgins' mother is a huge, though gentle, 17.2-hand mare, so the veterinarian was able to successfully reposition the foal inside the mare and an emergency trip to the veterinary

clinic did not come to fruition, thankfully. But Higgins didn't exactly escape the delivery unscathed. Like Shout, he suffered several broken ribs, no doubt due in part to his large frame. While Shout fractured ribs close to his flank, Higgins' jumbled ribs were near vital organs, his heart and his lungs. So Higgins was handed the same sentence as Shout—mandatory stall confinement.

The weeks passed slowly, but in time the mares and their foals began to see the light of day, literally. Shout and his dam were first to gain access to a small grassy enclosure. Each day the duo would spend several hours basking in the sun. Within a



Shout frolics in his pasture in Versailles, Kentucky. According to Gro-Trac, Shout is gaining weight at a healthy clip.

week or two, the twosome began alternating time in the pen with Higgins and his dam. The mares were tolerating their confinement well, but the colts were beginning to express their youthful exuberance, particularly Shout, who loped circles around his mother in the pen to uncork the bottled-up energy. Eventually, Shout was introduced to a one-acre paddock. Shout was only in the paddock approximately a week before Higgins was allowed carte blanche exercise, so the time had come to turn the foals out together in a large pasture.

As foals often do, Shout and Higgins would have nothing to do with one another during the first week of being pastured together, and then slowly, ever so hesitantly, they began approaching one another. It wasn't long, however, before the standoffishness gave way to bouncing, bucking, and bolting, all the while becoming the best of friends. The colts were well over a month old by then, and the protective instincts of their mothers had slacked significantly. In fact, the matrons were happy to slip away from their charges every now and then.

By this time, the foals were old enough to have their hooves trimmed for the first time. In preparation for this, my friend and I began practicing picking up feet, starting with the front and ultimately the hind. Higgins was the perfect gentleman. Like his mother, he is docile and completely enamored of his human contacts. And then there was Shout, who over the course of his short life had become sensitive to human touch anywhere except on his head and perhaps his neck. Touching other body parts was forbidden. Therefore, picking up his feet became an ordeal. I would pick up a front leg and he would begin leaning, so much so that on more than one occasion he landed in a heap on the ground. Once he would right himself, we would try again. He huffed and he puffed, and I really huffed and puffed and sweated.

The day of reckoning arrived. As predicted, the farrier was in and out of Higgins' stall in minutes, two to be




Shout and Higgins meet for the first time. Though tentative at first, the two became fast friends.

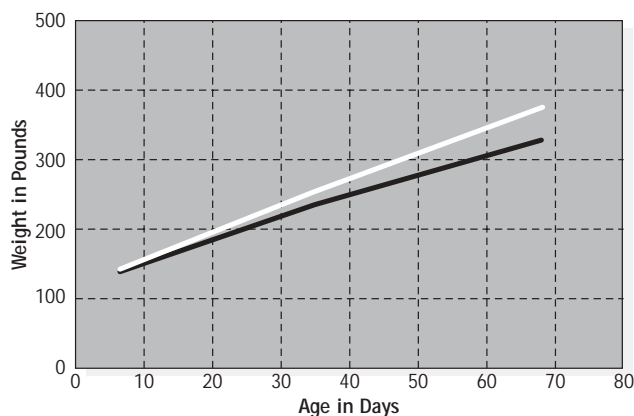
exact. And then it was Shout's turn. He tried to be a bully and he tried to fall over, but the farrier, a husky Irishman, would have nothing to do with Shout's evasive shenanigans and kindly set him straight whenever necessary. Needless to say, we're still working on picking up his feet. Now, I'm thinking of ways to shape Shout's willfulness to work in my favor. So far I'm coming up empty-handed, but I'm still thinking!

Shout and Higgins Weigh In

As it turns out, Shout is growing by leaps and bounds. The colt packed on about three and one-half pounds a day during his first month of life. On May 1, at 36 days of age, Shout tipped the scales at nearly 252 pounds, which is about 107 pounds more than he weighed at birth. Although this may seem extreme, it is actually a reasonable rate of gain for March-born colts in Kentucky. He is gaining a smidgen more weight than his peers of the same age and sex.

Higgins, on the other hand, weighed a whopping 243 pounds at 28 days of age. Colts of his age born in April usually hit the 205-pound mark. This fact makes Higgins about 18% heavier than others his age. Higgins is not obese, in fact few foals are, but he possesses height and scope, likely a reflection of his tall, lanky mother.

Gro-Trac is the software that allows Kentucky Equine Research (KER) to compare Shout and Higgins' growth against that of many other foals. Over the course of twelve years, researchers at KER have accumulated the height and weight records for thousands of young horses. Researchers have crunched those numbers to arrive at averages for young horses of different sexes and ages. This database is continually changing as more data are entered monthly. 



Shout (white line) is growing steadily, as indicated by this graph. He remains larger than his average peer (black line).