



## Construction of a Phantom Mare

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As breed associations have eased restrictions on equine semen shipment and artificial breeding programs, there has been an increased interest in on-farm semen collection. The best way to accomplish this is through construction of a phantom mare. The ability to collect semen with an on-site phantom offers the following advantages: more efficient use of everyone's time during the breeding season, elimination of the risks involved in transporting the stallion to a breeding facility for collection, and reduced risk of injury to the stallion, tease mare and handlers during collection. There are many ways to construct a suitable phantom; this article will describe the materials and methods used to construct the 2 phantoms at Equine Medical Services.

Site selection is the first step in building a useful phantom. Ideally, the phantom should be constructed under roof as weather during breeding season is often unpredictable. Firm, non-slip footing is important for the stallion as well as the people assisting the collection. Placement of the phantom 3 feet away from a wall or horse-safe fence provides ample space for the tease mare while not allowing too much room for her to easily move away and discourage the stallion. Plenty of open space in front of and behind the phantom should be available for quick escape if necessary.

Once a location has been selected, construction can begin. It is important that the phantom be built out of sturdy material that is durable enough to withstand the weight and impact of an aggressive stallion. Our phantoms are mounted on treated 6x6 posts anchored in 36 inch deep holes, filled with concrete. The posts are approximately 4 feet apart which allows room to work under the backside of the phantom without interference from the rear post. The rear height of the phantom should be roughly the same as the average mare's hind quarters. For the average light breed horse, 54 inches is adequate. This height can be accomplished using 8 foot posts.

The body of the phantom is constructed by stair-stepping a 2x12, a 2x10 and a 2x8 to each side of the post. We used lag screws to directly secure the 2x12 and 2x10 to the post and attached the 2x8 with nails or wood screws. A 2x6 can be used to box in the body of the phantom. The length of the phantom is somewhat less dependent on the size of the horse, but should not be less than 6 feet. The phantom may be built level with the ground or with the head slightly (no more than 15 degrees) elevated depending on the preference of the builder.

Finally, the phantom should be fitted with ample padding under a durable smooth surfaced cover. Cover material should not be abrasive or irritating to the horse. Our clinic phantoms are padded with a roll of carpet padding layered about 3-4 inches thick secured with duct tape under a leather cover built to fit our phantom by Borntreger leather shop in Clark, MO.

On-farm phantom mares can be constructed for relatively little expense and offer great convenience and added safety to a breeding program. If you have questions about building a phantom mare or a concern regarding the health and well-being of your horses, do not hesitate to call our clinic. A veterinarian will be glad to assist you with all of your equine medicine, lameness, surgery or reproductive needs.