

Helpful hints **on how to take photos of your special animal**

The Snap shot:

You need to understand that the better the photographs, the better the result will be. The quality of the final portrait depends very much on the quality of the photographic reference of the animal I am to illustrate.

You will need to provide good quality photographs of your animal and more than one, especially close ups of detail areas are very helpful to me.

Remember that as I do not know your pet as you do – so you need to show me. The better the photographs, the better the result. All photos will be returned with the finished work.

If you can, try and take photos of your pet specifically for the image you want me to do for you. For example I do not need the entire body if I am doing just a head portrait.

If you can't do this, then I will try and work with the photos that you have already. Or if I am in your area I could take the photos I need (at the cost of \$50).

If you are taking the photographs for your portrait that you have commissioned from me it is worth remembering the following points:

The Pose that you want ...

- **Please don't stand too far away from your pet when taking photographs. Try to fill the frame with as much of the animal as possible.**
- If it is just a head and shoulders portrait, then get as close as possible to the animal, (for example close-up shots of the head are very important as they also capture eye colour and details of markings around muzzle, nose etc that I will need).
- To get their attention try a squeaky toy but bear in mind that this will make their ears prick up. If it's a more 'relaxed look' that you want then you will have to be patient to capture this from your pet.

- If you have trouble keeping them still, then you can have someone holding them in the position. As long as they don't obscure the animal in anyway, it's a good, last resort method.
- **Try to get on a level with the subject's head.** For a horse this is not a problem but for a dog, cat, small pony etc. you may need to crouch, kneel or even lie down. Taking photos looking downwards from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet would make him seem shorter, his body too massive – the perspective would be ruined - it will distort the way he looks.
- If they are a dark colour, try to position your pet in front of light coloured background so that the outline of the animal can be clearly seen. Be careful not to have a black dog against a black background - mission impossible!
- Try to avoid the places where the grass is high. Imagine taking a photo of a little Terrier in a corn-field!... I'm being funny... but seriously, for a good animal portrait, it is better to find an open area, so that you will have all the details, of the paws, nails etc..especially if you want me to do a full body portrait. If you do not want to lie down then pick a place in the sun where there will be a terrace and a few steps. For example you could place the animal on a porch, at the edge of the steps, and climb down a few steps so that to have your camera at the height of your pet's chest. Now start clicking!
- In the case of a 'working dog' you may want them panting so an energetic game before the 'photo-shoot' may work. (When they do pant though, they tend to close their eyes a bit more, which wont be as good for the final portrait. Try and let them rest a bit before the photoshoot or just keep clicking away until you have a photograph with which you are happy with).
- **Above all, try to capture your pet in the position that most suits their character.**

What to Focus on

- In animal portraits the most important element is the eye. The reflection of the light on the eye and the expression of the eyebrows is key.
- If you focus on the eye, the chest will be fuzzy and the back and the tail will be too. That is another reason why I strongly recommend that you send me a group of photos of your animal.
- **It is important to remember that the only way I know your pet is through the photos you send me.**

- **If there are any special markings that are important to you – like particular markings on the tongue, muzzle or ears, legs etc then be sure to send me photos of those.**

Lighting

- **Choose good lighting conditions if possible.** The best lighting for photographs is natural daylight. Morning time has a cleaner light for some reason. A bright but overcast day without strong shadows is ideal. If very sunny or very dark it may be a good idea to take photos at several exposures (if possible) and send the most accurate colour match that you have to me.
- Try not to take photographs in bright sunlight as this will bleach the animal's natural colours.
- Only use 'flash' on the camera to highlight areas that may be too dark to see in normal light. These photos will only be used as reference to the final image. (I repeat - The more photographs, the better!)

Digital or 35mm Camera?

Both cameras can be used but be careful with the settings on the digital camera.

Prints are best to send. **Bigger the better!**

Digital files can be sent on CD but make sure that they are set to a high resolution. **(This option can be changed on the camera settings before taking photographs).**

Try and have the setting on 'Super High Quality' or the best quality that you have for the camera. Try not to use digital zoom as this degrades the image quality. Most of these cameras have an optical zoom too. This is the better option for the final image!

If all else fails, just send me what you have and I will do my best!!

If you cannot take special photos then you can send me written details or we can talk on the phone. If you do not wish me to contact you at home (perhaps if the commission is for a present for a family member) please let me know.

It would be very helpful if all photographs have your name and address on the back - they will be carefully looked after and returned to you with your completed work.

All portraits are sent unframed. I do not provide framed work as frames and glass are too easily damaged in transit.