



What to Consider When Buying A Horse

By Jackie Nix

There are many factors to consider while looking for the "perfect horse". Needs and desires will vary from person to person. Often, prospective buyers are surprised at the number of considerations and questions that need to be evaluated when selecting a horse.

Horse and rider compatibility - size compatibility, age of rider and horse, suitability for the intended purpose, and level of experience (horse's and rider's), must all be considered.

How much to spend - the key to buying a horse, especially your first horse, is moderation. Many good horses can be purchased for \$1,500 to \$3,000. Remember that it costs just as much to keep a cheap horse as an expensive one.

Breed or breed-type and color – select the breed or breed-type that will best suit your interests. Color may be a consideration if you are interested in color breeds.

Registered vs. grade horses – persons wishing to show in breed or registered shows or breed must purchase a registered horse.

Daily and monthly expenses – primary expenses are feed and board; however, these may vary tremendously. Total costs required by boarding stables could range from \$150 to \$600 per month. Additional costs include feed and supplements, health and farrier services, grooming aids, tack and equipment and possibly insurance. Owners must be prepared for these costs.

Sex of the horse - those wishing to breed obviously must purchase mares and stallions. Mares and geldings are preferred for pleasure horses. Many prefer geldings to mares particularly for novice or youth riders due to possible erratic behavior related to the mare's estrus cycle.

Where to get a horse - local breeders, area trainers, and horse agents or traders are a good place to start. Auction sales are another alternative, however the rule is "buyer beware". If showing is a desire for the new horse, consider going to horse shows. You can identify horses that may be for sale and observe their performance and behavior during an actual show. Other resources are classified ads in newspapers, breed journals and other publications as well as local veterinarians and Extension agents.

Pre-purchase exam - a must for prospective buyers. Should be made by a vet with experience in pre-purchase exams that has had no previous business with the seller. In addition, the buyer may request vaccination and deworming schedules as well as a complete health record.

Tips For Finding the Right Horse:

1. Take a professional with you to select the horse.
2. Make an unannounced visit after you have identified the horse as a prospect. Honest horse owners will not be offended by a surprise visit to see a horse for a 2nd or 3rd time.
3. Try to spend time alone with the horse prior to purchase.
4. Take time to tie up the horse and, if possible, cross tie to gauge its manners.
5. Have the owner ride the horse first and watch carefully. Try to see the horse ridden as fresh as possible.
6. While riding for evaluation, make the horse sweat. Some horses do fine with a light workout, but become ill-mannered beyond that.
7. Load and trailer the horse to see how it behaves.
8. Don't be afraid to ask questions.
9. Try to work out a lease or lease- purchase plan for the horse. This provides a great way to "test drive" a horse.

Once you get your new horse home, remember that proper mineral and vitamin nutrition is vital for your horse's health and happiness. Consider the **Sweetlix line of supplement products for horses** when purchasing mineral/vitamin or protein supplements for your horse. Contact your local Sweetlix dealer or call 1-800-325-1486 to learn more about Sweetlix equine supplement products and how they will benefit your horse.

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