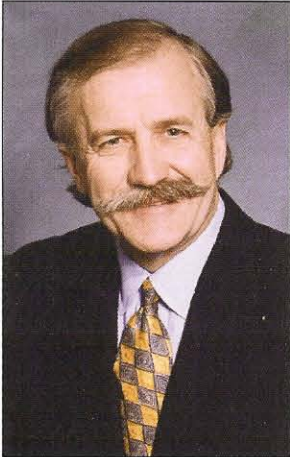


pre-purchase exams



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PURCHASING A HORSE CAN BE RISKY BUSINESS. ALMOST EVERY HORSEMAN HAS a story about buying a horse that turned out to be a dud. Even the most experienced horseman can be fooled if they aren't careful. Although there is no foolproof way to avoid getting stuck with a bad deal, you can increase your odds of getting what you think you are buying by getting a pre-purchase veterinary exam. Whether you are buying breeding stock, a backyard horse, or a high performance show horse, a pre-purchase exam can provide you with a level of assurance that you are getting what you are paying for. Moreover, if you intend to insure the horse, most insurance companies will require a veterinary certificate attesting to the health and soundness of the animal.

The scope of the exam will depend on the intended use of the horse. For example, if a broodmare is being purchased, you would need to determine if the mare is fertile and breeding sound. Or, in the case of a stallion, you may want to know the semen count. On the other hand, if you are buying a performance horse, you would undoubtedly want to know if the horse is sound of limb and wind. In many cases you would also want to see x-rays of the knees, fetlocks or hocks to rule out any ongoing degenerative process or injury. If you are at all suspicious of the use of tranquilizers or other medications, a drug screen would also be advisable.

The nature and extent of the exam should be discussed with your veterinarian and be based on the intended usage of the horse. The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) has developed the following guidelines to help prospective buyers understand the process:

Choose a veterinarian who is familiar with the breed, sport or use for which the horse is being purchased

- Explain to your veterinarian your expectations and primary uses for the horse, including short and long term goals

Ask your veterinarian to outline the procedures that he or she feels should be included in the exam and why

- Establish the costs for these procedures
- Be present during the purchase exam, along with the seller or agent
- Discuss with your veterinarian his or her findings in private
- Don't be afraid to ask questions or request further information about your veterinarian's findings in private

Do not expect a pass or a fail from the veterinarian. Instead, the veterinarian will provide you with appropriate information regarding the health and soundness of the horse. He will then discuss the importance of those findings with you so you can decide for yourself whether to purchase the horse. Although the veterinarian can and will offer his opinion regarding the current soundness of the horse, he cannot guarantee the future soundness of the horse. That risk will never be completely eliminated. However, a thorough pre-purchase exam by a qualified veterinarian will go a long way in ensuring that you get what you are paying for and thereby avoid the unpleasantness associated with lawsuits and lawyers.

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