

FINDING THE PERFECT HORSE

Part 2

When you are looking to buy a horse, it is easy to get excited and start to imagine and dream about all the amazing and wonderful things that you will be able to do with your new best friend.

But, if emotion gets in the way of common sense, the situation can be not only disappointing but also dangerous if the horse is beyond the rider's capabilities or is not suitable for what the rider wants to do.

If done incorrectly an experience that should be exciting, rewarding and enjoyable ends up in disappointment and distress when people buy a horse using too much emotion and not enough common sense.

So what do you do to make sure you end up with the horse of your dreams? Well there are a list of simple steps you can take to ensure that you do not end up disheartened and disappointed.

5. Be On Time

When you go to look at a horse try to be early or at least on time for your appointment; this gives you the opportunity to see the horse caught and handled and perhaps avoids issues such as the horse being hard to catch from being hidden.

Make sure you see the horse caught in the paddock; watch how it behaves and its body language when the owner moves towards it; is it positive or negative?

Being on time also creates a good rapport with the seller; if they are in a good mood you will be in a better position to negotiate with them if the horse is suitable.

Have your list of questions handy and start asking. The best chance you have is whilst you are face to face with the owner.

6. When It Is Time To Ride

What should happen when you look at a horse? It is important that you make sure that you get to see and hear all you want about the horse, whilst being realistic about what the owner can deliver.

If the horse can be ridden, get the seller to ride it first. This will make sure that the horse is as rideable as they state and also lets you take in the entire picture of the horse being worked under saddle.

If you have a friend or adviser with you let them ride it and when they have finished ask them (in detail) what they thought of the horse.

If after you have been through these steps, you feel the horse might suit, then you ride it.

Assess how comfortable you are riding the horse; can you walk, trot and canter comfortably (if that is what you do normally) and feel safe.

Ask if you can video everything so you can take the footage away and look at it again or even get another opinion. This gives you the opportunity to look at the horse in a more objective manner without feeling all the emotion that buying a new horse can bring whilst the horse is standing there beside you.

7. Equipment

Take your own gear (if you have some) as this will make you feel more comfortable when you are riding the horse.

It is also a good chance to see if it will fit the potential new horse and then work out what other new equipment you may need to purchase (and therefore if the horse is actually affordable).

8. Do Not Think You Are Taking The Horse Home Today

To help you make a rational decision about your new horse and to ensure you do not feel pressured into buying the wrong horse, make sure when you go to look at any horse you leave the float at home.

Not only will this make it easier for you to make an informed decision, but it will also stop the buying from being over confident (and possibly making false claims) that they have an easy sale on their hands.

If the horse is not suitable you will feel more comfortable leaving it behind and the seller will not feel cheated on a sale.

9. When To Walk Away

This can be the hardest thing to do, but it is best to do this, for your own peace of mind and your bank account if;

- o The horse is lame
- o The seller refuses a vet or drug test (yes there are people out there who do it!)
- o The seller has too many excuses or is rude
- o Your friend/advisor says too
- o You just have a bad gut feeling

And as hard as it is, if you go to look at a horse and you feel sorry for it as you feel it is in an unsafe place or is poor or in distress, that is not a reason to buy it. By all means, take the appropriate steps to ensure its safety, but do not buy it simply for the sake of making yourself feel better.

It is a lot cheaper to take your time and look at as many horses as it takes to find your unicorn than to rush out and buy the first horse you see and discover it is unsuitable later on.



If you are not looking for a high level performer, it is possible to forgive some conformational faults. This is Paprika, the quietest horse you could ever ask for, who has taught countless beginners. But she is no poster girl! Yet she is worth more as a teacher and educator than all our other horses!

ARTICLE & PHOTOS: MICHELLE O'NEILL

Lots of people dream of breeding a foal or owning a young horse. But think carefully; have you the time, facilities and experience for a young horse? Are you willing to put in lots of time and then potentially end up with nothing? Do you have the knowledge needed to ensure you end up with a happy, safe and respectful companion?

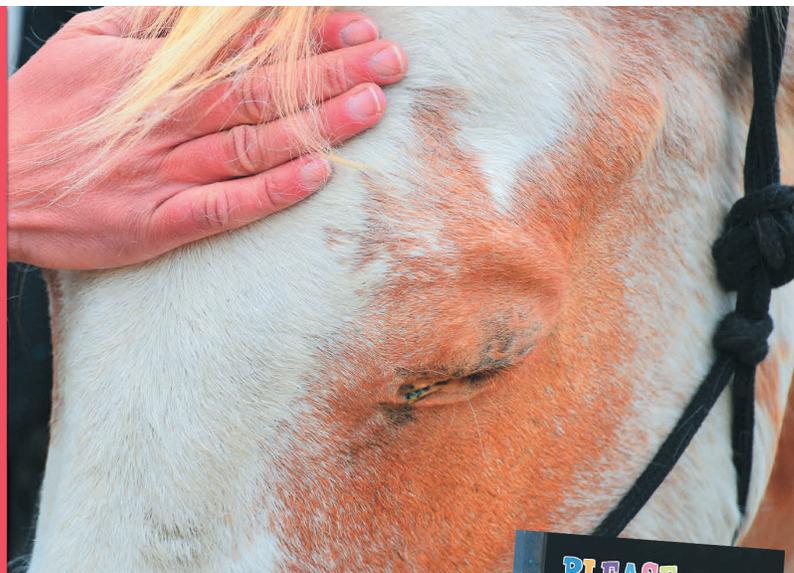


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