Equine Purchase Examinations

Unlike other consumer products that one might purchase, horses rarely come with a guarantee. Therefore, the buyer must make the best possible attempt to select an animal that is suitable and capable of performing a given function, whether this is a family pet or a high level athlete. The buyer should handle the horse in the barn and under saddle. If you have a trainer, utilize their expertise in choosing the right horse for your needs.

Purchasing examinations may vary, depending on the intended use of the horse and the veterinarian who is doing the examination. Deciding exactly what should be included in the purchase examination requires good communication between you and your veterinarian. The following guidelines from the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) will help ensure a custom-tailed exam:

- 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 (e.g., showing, then breeding).
- 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. The seller or agent should also be present.
- 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.

The goal of the purchase exam is to provide the buyer with enough information to make an informed decision on whether the horse will meet their needs. The purchase exam assesses the general health, conformation and soundness for intended use. It is the veterinarian’s responsibility to note any pre-existing problems and assist the buyer in determining which ones can be managed and which will limit present use or have potential to cause future problems. Perfectly sound animals—those with no physical faults—are rarely found. A horse may have minor alterations from “perfection” and still be able to perform the given task.
Breeding soundness exam for potential breeding animals

Preparing yourself in advance, helps you know what to expect from the experience. The purpose of the purchase examination is not to pass or fail the horse, but to inform the buyer of existing or potential problems that could render the horse unsuitable for its intended use. Open communication with the seller and your veterinarian ensures that everyone is on the same page. The pre purchase exam is one tool that can assist you in your buying decision.

For more information:
Please contact your veterinarian and take advantage of information for horse owners at The American Association of Equine Practitioners www.aaep.org, search publication archives under Owners, Horse Health.

### The Horse

#### External Features: (marked with letters)
- A. Croup
- B. Point of hip
- C. Loin
- D. Back
- E. Withers
- F. Poll
- G. Hock
- H. Stifle
- I. Cannon
- J. Elbow
- K. Chestnut
- L. Point of shoulder
- M. Pastern

#### Skeletal Structure: (marked with numbers)
- 1. Coccygeal vertebrae
- 2. Tuber sacrale
- 3. Scapula
- 4. Axis (second cervical vertebra)
- 5. Atlas (first cervical vertebra)
- 6. Femur
- 7. Tibial crest
- 8. Tarsus (or tarsal bone)
- 9. Small metacarpal bone (splint bone)
- 10. Olecranon
- 11. Accessory carpal bone
- 12. Proximal sesamoid bone
- 13. Elbow joint
- 14. Radius
- 15. Carpus or carpal joint
- 16. Fetlock joint

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