

Guide to Buying Equines

Buying a new equine for your group can be a daunting task, particularly if it isn't something that you do on a regular basis. There are lots of things to consider, hopefully this guide will support you to make informed decisions. Please contact your Regional Equine Advisor or equine Veterinary Surgeon if you have any questions. As making the incorrect decision about an equine can be time consuming and dangerous to all involved.

Sourcing Suitable Equines to View

Building a network in advance of looking for an equine can help. It is always better to be proactive rather than reactive. If you suddenly have a lameness or health issue then knowing where to look and who to speak to will speed up the process of filling that gap. Succession planning for your equines, whether due to retirement, health or injury is always recommended to aid continuity of your sessions.

A recommendation of a seller always gives an element of reassurance. You can speak to your practicing Vets, RDA Regional Vets, Regional Equine Advisors and other RDA groups. We have an RDA Equine Facebook page and an RDA What's App group for exactly this kind of thing.

Make sure you have your funds in place before you start looking so you can act quickly should something ideal be for sale. Stick to your budget, and do not view something that is out of your price range.

Research

Do your homework, ask lots of questions to establish suitability. Utilise our RDA resources and any experiences other groups may have had.

When you phone to book your viewing have a list of questions ready. These should include any issues with health, behaviour, vices, the horse's current environment, why is it for sale, are they open to vetting. Don't be worried to ask even if you feel it is a silly question.

The Viewing

The person viewing must be experienced in this area. If you don't have someone in your group who is confident or experienced enough then speak to the people above.

Ask to see the equine caught in a field, groomed and tacked up and ridden first by the seller in all paces. Seeing how the horse behaves at a mounting block can be a key thing for RDA riders. If applicable ask to see a jump. Have someone lead the horse and sidewalk from both sides. Imagine an RDA session and try and replicate that as much as possible.

If you are happy with what you see, ride the horse yourself. Don't feel any pressure to get on if you aren't happy with how it behaved for the seller. Or take someone with you who can ride the equine.

If you're happy with everything so far ask to see the horse's passport. It may be worth repeating the questions you asked on the phone to make sure you get the same story. Be aware you may need to leave a deposit. Make sure this is refundable and you get a receipt. It's vital that sellers know that we have vulnerable and sometimes unpredictable participants, and our horses need to be able to deal with this. They also need to recognise that we need fit and healthy horses that are an investment for our groups.

Be honest with yourself. Can you handle any training needs, and do you have the resources to do so? Remember what isn't right for one group may be perfect for the next so share your findings, good or bad!!

Remember you are representing RDA. RDA always strives to always present a professional approach, and this includes when buying horses. It goes without saying that due diligence when spending charitable funds must always be recognised.

The Vetting

Once you have considered all of the above, if you feel happy to proceed then the next step is to arrange your vetting or a trial. A vetting, otherwise known as a 'pre-purchase exam', is a physical examination of the horse by an experienced veterinary surgeon to identify any potential problems and to assess the horse's suitability for your needs.

If you are considering buying a horse outside your geographical area you may not know a local reputable vet to perform this examination. The seller may suggest that you use their vet but there are pros and cons to this solution. The vet may feel more pressure to pass the horse to avoid upsetting the seller. However, if you do decide to use the seller's regular vet, it should be conditional on the disclosure of the full medical history of the horse known to the vet. This can often give very useful insight into previous problems, or reassurance if the horse has only received routine veterinary care such as vaccinations and dentistry. If you want to use someone independent to perform the examination, your regular vet, your local RDA regional veterinary advisor, or the RDA Honorary vet, may be able to recommend an experienced vet in that area.

The vetting procedure consists of a standardised examination, either a 2 stage exam, or a 5 stage exam. In the 2 stage exam, the eyes are assessed in a dark stable, the heart and lungs checked, and a thorough examination and palpation of the head, limbs and body performed. The horse is then seen to walk and trot in a straight line, flexion tests are performed on all legs, and the horse is examined on the lunge on a firm surface. In a 5 stage vetting, the examination proceeds as before but then the horse is assessed ridden. It is worked hard until tired and then stood to cool off before repeating the trotting in a straight line, and sometimes lunging, to see whether the strenuous exercise has exacerbated any lameness issues. A blood sample is usually taken at this point which is stored for six months. If a future dispute arises over the sale of the horse, this blood sample can be retrospectively analysed for the presence of drugs such as sedatives or pain relief.

Once the vet has completed the examination, they will detail any abnormal findings they have made and discuss the likely significance of these findings. They will then inform you of their view as to whether the horse is suitable for your needs.

Completing the Purchase

Make sure you have a receipt with a full description of the horse including passport number, sellers contact details, date and the price agreed. Lastly make sure you receive the passport as by law this needs to travel with the horse.

All of the above can apply (apart from a purchase price) for a loan situation. Make sure you consult our Gift and Loan Policy and fill in the forms with as much detail as possible covering every eventuality and who may be liable for any cost.

If you have any queries about purchasing or loaning an equine please do not hesitate to contact Doug Smith riwm2@hotmail.com

Insurance

Where possible and if required, the prospective purchaser is advised to confirm they can insure the equine before purchasing. Pre purchase certificates are required to submit to the insurance company.