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BEFORE PURCHASING A HORSE

While horses are loved and admired by a majority of people, owning a horse is a big responsibility. It involves an ongoing financial commitment and one of time to ensure the horse's well-being. Educating yourself before buying a horse is important for the horse's welfare, your understanding of what is involved, and helping to ensure the right match when the time is right to buy.

The smallest expense involved with horse ownership is the initial cost of buying the horse. Other expenses which will be ongoing are for proper feed, vet and farrier care as well as either boarding fees or purchases of items to keep a horse if you own (or rent) horse property. It is very wise to enlist the services of a qualified equine veterinarian to perform a pre-purchase exam before buying a horse. This exam will help uncover any potential physical issues which you may not be prepared to pay for. It is also wise to take a knowledgeable trainer with you for a horse you intend to ride.

If possible, visit a potential horse you wish to buy more than once. If you plan to ride the horse make sure to ride it on these visits – if looking for a trail horse, don't just ride it in a round pen or arena setting. Also some horses are not comfortable in arena settings for a variety of reasons, so if you plan to use an arena, ride the horse in that type of setting as well.

Don't forget about expenses for tack, grooming items, other equipment such as truck and horse trailer, shelter, and appropriate fencing. Whether boarded or at home, a horse needs clean, dry shelter, turnout and safe fencing as part of proper horse care.

Horses also require daily exercise. When boarding, look for a facility which offers adequate turn out. Small runs or corrals don't give a horse a chance to trot or canter and limit their freedom of movement. While far better than just a 12x12 stall with no run – unfortunately too many boarding barns still use this type of shelter – horses are large animals which need to move around as much as possible. Confinement can lead to physical and mental/emotional issues.

Enrolling in riding lessons, volunteering at equine centers like rescues or therapy programs, attending informational events or clinics (horse expos are a good example) or leasing a horse are good ways to become familiar with horses before making the

investment of owning one.

Horses are a major responsibility and require more than feeding, a bucket of water, and some attention. They need to be groomed, receive regular exercise, medical care, and ongoing companionship during their lives. Horses are herd animals and need social interaction with other horses. Their nutritional needs are unique to horses and, unlike dogs or cats, they can live into their thirties and even forties.