

## Buying a Horse

Buying a horse should be well planned and carefully thought out. Don't settle for less than you expect or more than you can handle. There are always other horses and other days. The safest way to buy a horse is to locate an honest seller and take along an experienced person to help you. Satisfaction comes from knowing what you want and searching until you find it. Insist on quality, even at a higher price. Remember that a horse is not essential; therefore, the market favors the buyer. Reject a horse if it isn't what you want or doesn't meet your needs. Don't let a fancy pedigree hide poor quality.

Horses are expensive, to buy or to keep. Also, a lot of time is required for daily care. Unless you are willing to devote time on a regular, daily basis and to pass up other activities, you probably should not become a horse owner. Horses can become a life-long hobby, and owning a horse may also encourage development of responsibility in young people. A horse is a long-term investment. Buy the best horse possible -- a good one eats no more than a poor one.

An adequate facility is probably the most important item and may be the most expensive. Exercise areas are essential. If the horse must be hauled to an exercise area, a trailer or other vehicle is needed.

A horse's condition and training are more important than its age. Prime age for a horse is about seven to nine years, but this is not necessarily the ideal age. Horses frequently are active into their late twenties if they get proper care. A buyer can often buy a top-quality older horse at the same price or less than would be paid for a younger horse of lesser quality. Although most older horses can not perform as actively as they did when younger, they may have many years of useful service left. The age of the horse you buy depends on what you can afford and what horses you find available. Your experience is also important. If you are an inexperienced rider, you should not purchase an untrained young horse unless both you and the horse will receive training from a competent professional.

Prospective horse owners should learn all they can about horses before buying. Keep an open mind while learning. Visit horse shows and breeding farms. Observe different breeds of horses and different styles of riding. Ask questions. Most experienced horse owners will be glad to help a newcomer.

A horse should please and satisfy its owner for more than just a few weeks or a few months. To do this, the horse must be capable of doing things the rider wants done. A horse selected for informal pleasure riding will be quite different from one chosen for competitive riding in shows and other contests. Few horses can do everything, and certain types may be better at particular tasks than others. A horse should be selected with a specific rider in mind. The age, experience, training and interest of the rider must be carefully matched with the horse. Young children should not be mounted on large horses, nor should adults expect to ride ponies.

This article adapted from Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA. Please contact the Farm Advisor's office at [cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu) or 754-6477 with your agricultural questions.