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Don't Skip the Purchase Exam

Owning a horse can be a big investment in time, money and emotion. Unfortunately, horses seldom come with a money-back guarantee. That's why it is so important to investigate the horse's overall health and condition through a purchase exam conducted by an equine veterinarian. Whether you want a horse as a family pet, a pleasure mount, a breeding animal, or a high performance athlete, you stand the best chance of getting one that meets your needs by investing in a purchase exam.

Purchase 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-tailored 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 veterinarian's job is neither to pass or fail an animal. Rather, it is to provide you with information regarding any existing medical problems and to discuss problems with you, so that you can make an informed purchase decision. Your veterinarian can advise you about the horse's current physical condition, but he or she cannot predict the future. The decision to buy is yours alone to make. But your veterinarian can be a valuable partner in the process of providing you with objective, health related information.

For more information about purchase exams, ask your equine veterinarian for "Purchase Exams: A Sound Economic Investment," a brochure provided by the AAEP in conjunction with Education Partner Bayer Animal Health. Additional information can be found on the AAEP's horse health Web site, www.myHorseMatters.com.

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