

# GUIDE TO BUYING A HORSE

Owning or caring for just one horse will leave you with little or no 'spare' time. If you are adding to your 'herd' you should seriously consider whether you have the time to commit to an extra horse. You should be sure that you have a suitable home in mind. If you are a livery client always check there is enough space for a new addition to the yard.

Horses are also a big commitment to your purse strings. You will need to take into consideration the fixed costs that come with horses such as insurance, routine vet bills, feed, farriery etc.

Looking for the perfect horse can be tricky and time consuming. Consider carefully the type of horse you are looking for:

- Is the horse to be ridden by yourself, or also other members of your family?
- Do you have the time, patience and riding skill to bring on a young or inexperienced horse?
- Do you aim to compete? Consider the horse's potential, as well as your own

If you are looking for an older horse ensure you enquire about its history, including its veterinary record. The vendor should be able to supply a clinical history for their horse, if requested. Once you have decided to make a purchase you should consider the type of pre-purchase examination which would be most suitable. A Pre purchase veterinary examination can take two forms - 2 stages or 5 stages.

The Stages are:

1. **Full clinical examination** – Listen to heart, lungs, look in eyes, mouth (a full dental examination is not part of a vetting). Feel entire horse for abnormalities. Examination does not include examination inside the sheath, height measurement or examination for pregnancy. Bend all limbs, check feet, assess conformation.
2. **Trot up/flexion test** – Assessing horses gait at walk and trot, circling, turning and reversing. Flex limbs and assess any pain on trot up after flexion which may indicate joint problems/other injuries.  

**THE TWO STAGE EXAMINATION FINISHES AT THIS STAGE**
3. **Strenuous Exercise** – Riding/lunging the horse until it is exerted. Assess gait under saddle if ridden, listen to heart after fast exercise, listen to any wind (airway) noise when horse blowing.
4. **Period of Rest** – Allow horse to stand in stable for 15-20 minutes. Note: If observed. However vices, temperament or behavioural issues not observed are not part of a vetting. Observe for behavioural 'vices'. Use time to complete ID of horse and take blood sample.
5. **Final Trot up** – Assess gait at walk and trot – looking for signs of stiffness/lameness following strenuous exercise.

Vets recommend all horses have bloods taken. A 2 Stage vetting is a limited examination, so a letter must be signed to say the client understands the limitations before the certificate can be issued.

## Avoiding Field Injuries

- Ensure there is sufficient grazing for the number of horses turned out. If feeding in the field provide a number of piles of forage and spread these out.
- Limit group numbers and introduce new horses gradually. Consider individual or pairs turn out if possible.
- Don't bring other horses in and leave one out on its own.
- Check the security of your fencing on a regular basis and keep horses away from barbed wire by using electric tape.
- Try and stick to routine times of turning and bringing in.
- Manage your horse's feed and exercise regime so that they do not have too much surplus energy to use in the field.
- Look after the pasture - check for rabbit holes, wire and other hazards.
- Consider overreach boots or other protection but do check regularly for any rubbing.



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## SPRING 2015 EQUINE NEWSLETTER

### ZONE VISITS

#### **North Zone - once monthly (Monday)**

To include: Kirkby Lonsdale, Kendal, Sedburgh, Dent and Garsdale.

#### **North West Zone - once monthly (Monday)**

To include: Ulverston, Barrow in Furness, Broughton in Furness, Ambleside and Windermere.

#### **South Zone - once monthly (Tuesday)**

To include: Clitheroe, Whitewell, Langho, Whalley, Rishton, Nelson, Barrowford and Barnoldswick.

#### **Central Zone - every Tuesday**

To include: Settle, Ingleton, Burton in Lonsdale, High Bentham, Low Bentham, Slaidburn, Tosside, Rathmell, Wigglesworth, Bolton by Bowland, Gisburn, Hellifield, Otterburn, Calton, Malham, Horton in Ribblesdale, Chapel le Dale.

#### **East Zone - every Wednesday**

To include: Bell Busk, Gargrave, Skipton, Ilkley, Silsden, Colne, Keighley, Barnoldswick, West Marton and East Marton.

#### **West Zone - every Thursday**

To include: Milnthorpe, Warton, Carnforth, Bolton le Sands, Morecambe, Lancaster and Galgate.

Should you have any queries regarding the types of procedures which can be carried out on a Zone Visit, please do not hesitate to contact us at the surgery on **01729 823538**.



### SPRING CASTRATION OFFER

Throughout **March** and **April** Dalehead are offering a discount on standing castrations, if paid for at the time. For castrations carried out at your own yard or stable there will be a discount of **15%** plus your usual visit charge.

If the procedure is done at our Equine Clinic in Rathmell there will be a discount of **20%** and the benefit of **no visit charge**. This offer excludes any drugs prescribed for post castration care or tetanus antitoxin.

Please contact Sarah or Nicola at the surgery on **01729 823538** to book an appointment or for more information.

# CARROT STRETCHES



Carrot stretches are a simple, quick and effective way of improving your horses' spinal flexibility, core strength and stretching out their topline. They can be useful both as maintenance of a healthy horse, rehabilitation and also to limit the loss of strength and mobility associated with periods of box rest (if your horse is on box rest please check with your vet prior to commencing any exercise programme). All that's needed are some carrot pieces and if you prefer, some gloves to protect your fingers.

Stand your horse square if possible then using a long, thin piece of carrot guide their head to the desired position. Keep the carrot close to their lips to maintain interest and when they're in the desired position hold for 5-10seconds.

## Between foreleg stretches:

Take the piece of carrot:

- Between the fore fetlocks
- Between the knees
- Between the forelegs at chest height

Aim to draw their head back in a straight line, underneath their body as far as possible without them stepping back.

## Long and low to the side:

Take the piece of carrot level with the outside of the front fetlock nearest you and then take it back towards the hind fetlock.

Over time, as your horse becomes more flexible you should be able to take it further back on all stretches.

## Things to look for:

### 'Abdominal line'

As your horse uses their stomach muscles a line will appear on their stomach going back towards the flank area (as shown in the pictures). This is the equine equivalent of a sit up!

### The back rounding and lifting

The effect of your horse contracting their abdominals is flexion of the back and it encourages them to lift through their rib cage, giving the appearance of the back becoming more level and curving up rather than down.

### Foreleg bending

It is fine if your horse bends a foreleg so long as there is still a visible effect on the abdominals and the back is lifting. If they bend a foreleg and nothing changes on their barrel, they're cheating!



# HOW TO SAFELY AND EFFECTIVELY REINTRODUCE YOUR HORSE TO AN EXERCISE AND REHABILITATION REGIME

Acute injury or illness can call for a period of enforced box rest. How can you ensure a successful rehabilitation once your vet has indicated that your horse is allowed out of its stable ?

- You will need to accept that rehabilitation can be an even bigger challenge than box rest. A patient approach and attention to detail are key. This can be a long drawn out process and the odd setback is almost inevitable.
- Fencing off a small area outside the stable can often provide a gradual start.
- Work with your vet to devise a programme to suit you and your horse. This will be dependent upon the type of facilities you have available along with the severity of the injury or condition which has been suffered.
- Do expect some 'explosions' of energy and consider a tranquiliser such as Sedalin Gel or Domosedan Gel to take the edge off your horse's energy — your vet will be able to give you advice on this.



Always wear a riding hat and gloves and use a bridle or chifney when leading your horse out initially. You should use an enclosed area for the first few outings.

Proceed according to your horse's temperament and individual needs—he may walk more sensibly on long reins than in hand or on the lunge.

# FIRST AID

The aim of first aid is to help preserve life, minimise further injury, prevent suffering, stabilise the horse's condition and promote recovery.

## What should you do if your horse is injured ?

Please remember your own safety and of those around you. Human lives must come first how ever much your horse is part of your family. Firstly, **do not panic and try to keep calm**. If you panic, it is likely you will not think clearly, your horse may pick up on your distress and themselves begin to panic. Unless absolutely necessary, try not to shout or wave your arms about as this may worry your horse.

Remember that an injured horse may behave in an unpredictable manner, even if they are usually bomb proof. If it is safe to do so, assess the injury. If it is possible and safe to move the horse and you are in an unsafe place (for example at a roadside), try and move to safety.



Decide on whether to call the vet. Unless you are very experienced in assessing and dealing with wounds, and the wound is very superficial, it is usually a good idea to call the vet. Even the smallest wounds can have serious consequences and a tiny puncture wound over a joint or tendon sheath can lead to infected structures that may require surgery. If not treated quickly the horse may require euthanasia. Remember — it is always better to be safe than sorry.



Natalie Fizio is a Chartered Veterinary Physiotherapist, more information can be found at [www.hilltopvetphysio.co.uk](http://www.hilltopvetphysio.co.uk).