

# BUYING A HORSE

... the Process - the Rewards and the Trials ...

by Lisa Marie Bishop

One of the most exciting things that we as horse-crazy individuals might do is to buy a new horse. Ahhhh! That new horse smell! Oh, the hours perusing Dreamhorse.com, Equine.com, ANYhorse.com, frantically clicking the mouse over bays, grays, chestnuts, and paints. We look up bloodlines, stalk siblings' show records, ask for more photos and videos, then email them to our friends with the subject line reading, "What do *you* think?"

BUT there are a few things to consider before buying your new equine partner. Following a couple of these tips can help you maintain the quest as a positive and fun adventure and not a frustrating and negative experience.

First, if you're not a **PROFESSIONAL TRAINER** and don't have one, you may want to hire out! Having a trainer you trust can help you avoid the pitfalls so many new or amateur buyers fall into. A trainer knows what questions to ask, can ride the horse and make sure he's appropriate for your level of experience, arrange the vet check, and negotiate the price of the horse. The fee for this service is usually discussed and agreed upon before the purchase of the horse, OR can be a percentage of the sale of the horse. Be honest with yourself and the trainer about your riding level, and your short and long term goals. This will give them a better perspective on what to keep an eye out for, and not waste time checking out horses that don't fit your needs.

Which brings me to point number two ... **EXPERIENCE**. Don't look for a horse that is a scopey, four foot jumper if you've been riding crossrails with the HOPE of jumping four foot. And don't buy an upper level, big-moving Dressage horse when you've been only riding six months! It's great to have aspirations and there's no doubt that down the road you can achieve your dream of that four foot class or Fourth Level test, but climb the ladder one rung at a time. Start



with an older horse who can safely jump three feet and under in a nice quiet manner with honest consistency. Or a Dressage horse who has been to the shows, seen it and done it all, and is trained well enough to teach you the movements but not such a big mover that you can't sit the trot! Your confidence will improve as your new horse allows for some of the mistakes that can be made when moving to a new and challenging level. But be prepared, because in a couple of years, if you're still set on riding at the higher levels, you may have to sell Dobby and ... yep ... buy another horse!

Point Number Three ... **FINANCIAL**. Sadly, this is the one we pretend doesn't exist when scanning the internet horse ads. Okay, we've all done the advanced search, plugged all the wants and goals, color and breeds into the appropriate boxes, and the computer lets us know that our dream horse is a mega million dollars. Now, how many of you have called about that horse anyway? Hmmm? Oh please! We've all done it, and then tried to talk our spouse into refinancing the house, and selling the kids to afford it. I'm here to tell you, don't do it! Set your budget, let your trainer know what the budget is and stick with it. You CAN find a horse in your price range, but it just might take a little longer than if you were married to Bill Gates. On the other front, don't be tempted to buy a cheap

horse that needs "training" if you don't know how to bring a horse along. If you're going to buy an inexpensive horse simply for its lack of training, you're probably going to want to have a knowledgeable trainer working with you. This actually can be a fun and rewarding experience in the right hands, but if your plans are to show soon after the purchase this may not be the avenue for you, simply for the fact that it takes time and patience when training a green or young horse.

Don't get caught up in color, breed, or age. If the horse clicks with you and can get the job done ... who cares? Don't put too much pressure on yourself or the trainer to find a 16.2, bay gelding with four white socks. Instead, be honest about what will make you happy riding every day and the goals you might want to accomplish. That 15.3 black and white pinto might just be a star over fences! That chestnut quarter horse mare might be a nice mover and not mare-ish at all! Don't be too quick to edge out the older horse either; they've been around the block, or two, and can be your best friend if you get nervous or anxious during lessons or showing. And they are usually less expensive, with owners who are looking for a good home for them. It's your lucky day!

The most important part of buying the right horse is being honest and realistic about what you're looking for and trying the ones who are best suited for your future plans. Take great care in picking your new project and don't worry about the time frame. It could be the first horse you look at or the fifth; it doesn't matter, and you'll know when it's right. Don't be pressured into buying ANYTHING that feels uncomfortable to you; take your time and listen to your instincts. But by all means, have fun with the process! Buying a horse is a great learning experience and an enjoyable one when done right.

Leamanach Farm Winter Schooling Series

December 4-5 • January 8-9 • February 5-6 • March 5-6

Jumper Classes • Puissance Class • Gamblers Choice • Prize Money • Stabling • Food on Grounds

Lisa Marie Bishop • 614-425-2127 • [www.lisamariebishop.com](http://www.lisamariebishop.com)