

Tips & Tools

Before you commit to purchasing a horse:

- Seek the advice of experienced horse professionals.
- Determine where you will house the animal and determine if zoning regulations permit horses.
- Have a licensed veterinarian complete a thorough exam prior to the sale.
- Be aware that there will be monthly costs associated with keeping a horse, which include feed, grooming products, medical and farrier services.
- There are many breed associations and riding clubs, consider joining them to stay informed and give you access to people who can provide advice.
- Subscribe to equine related publications.
- Purchase a well trained horse that matches your skill level.
- Horses can live into their late 30's so be prepared to take care of the horse for its lifetime.
- Consider creating a separate monetary fund in case your horse requires emergency medical attention.
- Give serious consideration as to the purpose of your horse and what type of riding or showing you would like to do so that you can research breeds and disciplines of riding.
- Attend some competitions to observe horses in action and speak to participants.

Additional Resources

This brochure is meant as a guide only and you should consult with those who are experience with horses before you make your purchase. The groups and agencies listed below may provide additional information. You may also contact VHC directly is you have specific question: www.virginiahorsecouncil.org

Virginia Department of Agriculture
www.vdacs.virginia.gov (804) 786-2373

Virginia4-H www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h

*Your local library may also have books on purchasing and owning a horse.

**Membership dues made this brochure possible. Please consider joining the VHC so that we may continue to serve the industry.

***Information courtesy of the Connecticut Horse Council.

Horse Ownership for the Beginner



VIRGINIA
HORSE COUNCIL

The Virginia Horse Council
368 Litton Reaves (0306)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
www.virginiahorsecouncil.org
Toll Free Number
1-888-HORSEVA (888-457-7382)
Fax 1-540-231-3713

Virginia is home to thousands of horses of many different breeds and types. They are used for showing, breeding, racing, trail riding, or are just kept as companions.

Purchasing your first horse is very exciting, but it is also a large responsibility. Before you buy a horse, it is important to give serious consideration to the expense and physical needs of any horse regardless of what you intend to do with it.

Expenses

The cost of buying the horse is jokingly referred to as the cheapest part of horse ownership. There are many other associated costs that you need to budget for, which include grooming supplies, riding equipment, farrier and veterinary services, training, showing or boarding fees, insurance, and much more. You should also have money set aside in case the horse becomes sick or injures itself and requires emergency medical attention.

Housing

Your first decision should always be about where you are going to keep the horse once you have purchased it. Will it be stabled at home, or on another property? There are many horse facilities that will charge a fee to “board” you horse. There are two primary types of boarding situations: “Rough (also called partial)” and “Full”.

Rough or partial board is paying merely for a stall or pasture, and does not include actual care of the horse. You will “rent” a space from the owner to keep your horse on the property, but you will be responsible for feeding, cleaning and general care of your animal.

Full board is a situation where you pay the stable owner to care for your horse, and it usually includes feeding and cleaning of the stall.

Both of these types of boarding have many variables, so you should always discuss the details up front and get them in writing. Generally, board is paid on a monthly basis, but this can also vary depending on your situation.

If you are planning on keeping your horse at home, you must check your town zoning regulations. Just because you have acreage does not mean you are permitted to keep horses. Horses are considered livestock under Virginia state statutes, so you need to understand how your town/city views farm animals.

Other Services

A horse requires much in the way of maintenance, and you will need to seek the services of others, such as farriers (blacksmiths), veterinarians and trainers. Frequent visits from the farrier are required to keep a horse’s feet trimmed and in good condition. A horse will also need periodic worming, tooth care, and vaccinations. As a beginner you should also consider obtaining a trainer to assist you with learning to ride properly. You should also seek out the advice of these individuals before you choose any horse.

A veterinarian is especially important, because they can perform what is called a “prepurchase exam”. This exam will help determine if the horse has any underlying medical conditions you should know about.

Match Your Skills

If you are new to horses, it is best to purchase a horse that is well-trained (broke). A horse that does not have a lot of training is often referred to as “green”. This term is used regardless of the age of the horse, and reflects the horse’s skill level. A beginner rider should buy a horse that is experienced and reliable, and not a “green” horse, which would be more suitable for an advanced rider.

Suggestions

Many stables offer a “lease” situation. In other words, you pay a monthly fee to lease a horse to care for and ride. This allows you to experience horse care without having to own the animal. Many people lease horses for six months to a year before they decide they want to purchase one.

Some stables offer “working student” positions. This allows for a person (most often teenagers) to work in the stable in exchange for lessons or board. This is also a good way to learn basic skills about horse management and ownership.

Subscribe to horse related publications, as they often contain informative articles and industry news and contacts. If you need suggestions, the VHC can provide you with various examples.

Choosing and properly caring for the right horse can be very complex. It is worthwhile to seek the opinion of an experienced professional. Your local vet or feed store might be able to provide names of stables and trainers in your area who would be willing to speak with you.