

So, you're interested in owning a horse?



Maryland Horse Council

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If only love were enough ...



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Horses provide numerous positive benefits.

Horses ...

- Are wonderful companions;
- Can become a lifelong hobby;
- Create a wholesome environment for children and adults;
- Help enhance self-esteem;
- Provide an opportunity to develop enduring friendships;
- Provide a method for teaching and learning important life skills, including responsibility;
- Help develop a compassionate approach to life;
- Are an excellent form of exercise and recreation.

But ... BEFORE you buy ...



STOP

... and think.

Horse ownership is a huge responsibility. Before you acquire that adorable pony or wonderful horse, consider that horses and ponies ...

- Require an ongoing financial commitment. The least expensive part of horse ownership is usually the purchase price;
- Need a great deal of time and physical labor just in daily care;
- Require a great deal of specific knowledge for proper care;
- Can live a very long life -- sometimes up to 40 years;
- Usually prefer the company of other horses over people;
- Need food, water, stall cleaning (if stall kept), and looking after daily, 365 days a year - NO EXCEPTIONS;
- Can cause accidents without even trying;
- Need lots of exercise.

Decisions to make if you want to own a horse ...

- Will you keep it at home or board it someplace else?
- If you keep it at home, do you have enough appropriate land and safe containment for the horse? Does the zoning in your area allow horses?
- If you plan to keep it at home, are you aware that you will be responsible for the horse 365 days a year? The weather, your health, and your vacation schedule do not mean anything to your horse. Who will be responsible for daily care? Can you find back up help to care for your horse when you go away? Who will be responsible for maintenance (fence repair, pasture management, etc.)?
- Have you considered how and what you will feed it? No two horses have the same nutritional requirements, and the grass in your “pasture” may not be suitable to the horse you have in your barn.
- If you board it someplace else, will you be responsible for caring for it daily, or will someone else?
- Do you want to purchase the horse to teach your children responsibility? Horses cannot teach responsibility to children ... they can only help parents teach responsibility. Responsibility for a child’s horse always falls to the parents.



**Stop
and Think**

REALITY CHECK: DOLLARS & SENSE

BOARD

- Self-Care Field Board in Maryland starts at \$150 per month - for just one space. The horse owner must purchase everything else and provide the labor.
- Full-Care Field Board starts at about \$250 per mo.
- Full-Care Stall Board can range from \$350-\$800 or more per month in Maryland.

FEED

- Grain: Begins at \$13 per 50 lb. bag, and horses may need anywhere from nothing to over 10 lbs. per day
- Hay: Depending on the type and weight of the bale, \$4.50 per bale and up. Horses without adequate grass pasture, or during the winter months, may need from a half a bale to a full bale per day. Hay prices can fluctuate wildly, depending on seasonal weather conditions.

HOME SWEET HOME

- Safe Fencing - can start at \$4 per ft. (how big is your yard?). Fencing is in constant need of attention.
- Shelter - Barn, run-in shed; anything that allows the horse an escape from extreme weather conditions.
- Bedding (if stall kept) - Shavings run about \$5 per 50 lb. bag, straw runs about \$4 per bale. Bedding needs to be changed daily.
- Basic supplies - rakes, shovels, muck buckets (for removing manure, etc.), water and feed buckets, hoses, grooming equipment to see to your horse’s physical comfort, etc. (and nothing lasts forever).
- Places to store bedding and hay safely - Bedding and hay need to be kept in dry, well-ventilated areas (and fire is a constant danger).
- Places to store feed - Grains need to be protected from mold and rodents.

HEALTH CARE

- Regular Farrier Care runs from \$35 for basic trimming to over \$150 for shoeing all around, and more for special care.
- Regular Worming, every 6 to 8 weeks. Wormer runs between \$10 and \$20 per tube.
- Regular Veterinary Care, seasonal vaccinations. Some can be administered by the horse owner, others require veterinary certification. Seasonal vaccines can run \$150 or more, twice a year.

HEALTH CARE (cont.)

- Annual Dental Check-ups can be administered by your veterinarian during one of his seasonal visits, or by an equine dentist, approximately \$85 per visit, with an average of two visits per year.
- Emergency Veterinary Care can run from stitching a wound to major surgery at a veterinary hospital ... \$100 to \$10,000 and up.
- Incidental Health Care Supplies - thermometer, anti-septic ointment, surgical scrub, liniment. A pre-made first aid kit runs about \$150.
- Your own daily labor to make sure that your horse is happy, comfortable and healthy.

BASIC EQUIPMENT

- Halter and Lead Rope - even if you don’t ride or drive your horse, you will need a halter to lead and control him. \$25 to \$95 (new).
- Bridle - \$80-\$500 (new) - may or may not include reins and a bit.
- Saddle, saddle pads, martingales, breastplates, girths, wraps, boots, blankets, coolers, sheets, buckets, saddle soap (leather goods last longer when cared for). You don’t have to break the bank, but it’s easy to do.
- And for Riding, there’s all the stuff you will need for yourself ... helmet, breeches, boots and gloves; and for shows ... jacket, shirts, tie pin, jumping vest, etc. ... all of which range greatly in price.

Buy in haste, repent in leisure.

Have you ever purchased a horse before? Do you know how to purchase a horse? If this is your first horse, are you looking for a deal, a dream, or a safe, healthy horse who will teach you how to care for a horse? If you’re looking for a deal, there is no such thing as a free horse. If you’re looking for a dream horse, save that for when you have more experience in horse ownership. Find a trusted trainer or horse professional to help find an appropriate horse for you. Although it may cost more initially to purchase a horse through a professional, the cost is frequently much less than correcting the mistake of buying the wrong horse.

To avoid heartache, a pre-purchase veterinary exam is strongly recommended. A pre-purchase exam can help make sure that the horse you want is sound and healthy.

What will you do with the horse if your children outgrow it or lose interest, or if the horse becomes unusable due to injury or illness?

Options to Ownership

- Consider riding lessons—you get the fun parts without the drudgery.
- Consider leasing—you get to try horse “ownership”, but if it doesn’t work, you can return the horse to the owner and walk away without the guilt.
- Consider volunteering—more hands-on work, without the daily responsibility.
- Consider joining the Maryland 4-H Horse and Pony program, or the United States Pony Club.

More Information

You have considered all the ramifications of owning a horse and you decide you want to own. Congratulations on your decision to purchase a horse ... the world of horses can be a warm and loving environment for all the members of your family. It is important for everyone that you make an educated and informed decision.

The following organizations will provide you with more information, as well as access to professionals and educational seminars:

- * American Assn. of Equine Practitioners: www.aep.org
- * American Humane Assn.: www.americanhumane.org
- * American Horse Protection Association:
www.equineprotectionnetwork.com
- * American Veterinary Medical Assn.: www.avma.org
- * Maryland 4-H Foundation:
www.mymaryland4hfoundation.com
- * Maryland Cooperative Extension Service:
www.extension.umd.edu
- * Maryland Soil Conservation District: www.mascd.net
- * Days End Farm Horse Rescue: www.defhr.org
- * Equine Rescue and Rehabilitation, Inc.:
www.horserescue.com
- * The Equiery, MD’s Equine Info. Resource:
www.equiery.com
- * Your local library, book stores, and feed/tack stores.

**and then
think again.**