



A Guide to Buying American Quarter Horses

AMERICAN
QUARTER
HORSE
ASSOCIATION



“I just competed in my very first AQHA Versatility Ranch Horse competition in Jerusalem, Ohio. I have not shown for 25 years – I showed in AQHA as a youth. I had three goals: to stay on my horse, to keep all four of her feet on the ground and to have fun. And I’m happy to report that I achieved all three goals. I must tell you that this will go down as one of the highlights of my entire life. I cannot wait for my next competition. What a great way for me to get back into the show arena.”

*Tammy Sapowsky
Granby, Massachusetts*

Understanding Your Needs

Horse ownership can be a rewarding experience, one enjoyed by persons of all ages through a wide variety of activities, including shows, rodeos, races and recreational rides. The experience begins, naturally, with the purchase of your first horse. It is an important step, one which must be made with equal amounts of education and dedication. Your first purchase often sets the tone for your lifetime of horseback experiences.

The first step in horse ownership is asking yourself, “Why do I want a horse?” This question will help you form a goal, which, in turn, provides the framework for your buying decision. As a starting point, ask yourself the following:

- *What is my goal?*
- *Do I want to become a better rider and increase my knowledge of horses?*
- *What types of activities do I want to do with this horse?*
- *How much can I afford to spend on the purchase of a horse, plus stall rental, feed, training, health care and hauling?*
- *How much do I know about riding — am I a beginner; will I need additional riding instruction?*
- *Will I work with my horse on a daily, weekly or monthly basis?*
- *How much time can I devote to feeding, care, lessons, shows or trail rides?*

Different goals require different types of horses and different skill levels of the rider. If you plan to show competitively, the type of horse will differ greatly — in level of training, and subsequently, price — than a recreational riding horse. **Your overall goal as a horse owner is the foundation for your buying decision.**

Just as one researches buying a car, you should do your homework before purchasing a horse. The American Quarter Horse Association provides a toll-free number to help you locate others within your area who can aid your search for the perfect equine partner. By calling (800) 414-RIDE, AQHA can provide you with a referral to AQHA events in your area and other pertinent information to help you choose an area of interest to participate in.



AQHA Incentive Fund

If you're planning to show your horse, look for a horse that is enrolled in the AQHA Incentive Fund. You can earn money for each point you earn in AQHA open and amateur competition. The Incentive Fund has distributed more than \$2 million to enrolled horse owners and nominators each year since 1990, more than \$3 million each year since 1997. To be eligible for the Incentive Fund, the horse must have been sired by a stallion enrolled in the fund that breeding season. The foals of these stallions can then be nominated into the Incentive Fund for life with a one-time fee. Call AQHA for details on the program and a list of Incentive Fund breeders.

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Next, visit an AQHA event in your area in order to gain a perspective on available opportunities. At the event, watch the competition and try to determine how much work will be required to achieve your goal. Visit with others in attendance to get an idea of what it's like to compete in certain events, and evaluate your goals to see if they are realistic. Once you've established a specific goal, the next step is evaluating your level of horseback skills. Would you categorize yourself as:

- *Beginning, with limited knowledge of horses and riding in general?*
- *Intermediate, with a basic understanding of riding and knowledge of a chosen discipline?*
- *Advanced, with considerable knowledge of horses and competitive at a chosen discipline?*

Your skill level will indicate what kind of horse best fits your needs. For beginning or recreational riders, a broke, gentle gelding usually is the best bet. However, beginners with a competitive goal should locate a horse who has mastered requirements within the chosen activity, or is "seasoned." For example, if your goal is to one day become a competitive team roper, it's a good idea to find an older, yet sound, gelding who has been roped upon extensively. Find a horse with enough experience to help you advance your riding skills first, while still allowing you to compete and hone your competitive talents.

Intermediate equestrians have a bit more freedom of choice than beginners in that their horse should demonstrate fundamental activity requirements, as evidenced by some level of past performance, but they may not necessarily require a horse with years of experience. However, the horse should at least be suitable for a desired discipline, or demonstrate adequate potential.

Advanced riders have the greatest latitude in buying a horse, as they may be able to take a young horse who lacks experience and train him or her for a chosen activity. While this may be a rewarding experience when accomplished effectively, it should only be considered by advanced horsemen with years of experience who have the time to work with the horse.

Where to find a horse for purchase

It is important that you complete the following steps before you buy a horse:

- *Decide what you want to do with your horse*
- *Determine what level of rider you are*
- *Arrange for or build a safe place to stable your horse*
- *Decide who will feed and care for your horse*

Breeders

One of the best sources for purchasing a horse is a breeder. Breeders

4aHORSE Program

AQHA members and customers can call (877) 4aHORSE or log onto 4aHORSE.com to receive a free referral to members of AQHA's 4aHORSE Referral Program. This program matches buyers with reputable American Quarter Horse breeders who are guided by the 4aHORSE Referral Program's strict code of ethics. Breeders belonging to the program are members in good standing with AQHA and have bred registered American Quarter Horses for at least three consecutive years.



normally have a large selection of horses on hand, representing an array of ages, levels of training and dispositions. The main advantage of working with a breeder is that you can often gain credible insight about a horse. You have access to view other horses that have been bred by the owner; a chance to discuss pedigrees, performance and race records; the opportunity to see the kind of environment in which the horse was raised and/or trained; and the ability to compare other horses of similar type. The breeder also can discuss the advantages of particular bloodlines, as well as provide additional information about his or her individual breeding program.

Owners

Another means to purchase a horse is directly from the owner. The owner can provide the history of the horse's performance. Owners also may give helpful information regarding training and habits. Plus, most owners will allow prospective buyers to "try" a horse several times before purchasing. This one-on-one relationship helps establish goodwill between buyer and seller. *The American Quarter Horse Journal* and *The American Quarter Horse Racing Journal* are excellent resources, as they often advertise horse sales and horses for sale by owner.



Sales

Many beginners often look to horse sales for finding a horse, because they are geographically widespread and offer horses of different ages, training levels and prices. However, beginners must first understand that there are different types of sales, and not all may be the best place to purchase a horse. To get a better understanding of the types of sales available, take a look at the following.

Production

A production sale often features horses produced by breeders. A variety of horses

MBNA America® Quarter Horse Racing Challenge

If you're looking for a horse to race, consider getting a horse enrolled in the MBNA America® Quarter Horse Racing Challenge. The Challenge is a multimillion-dollar series with 71 races and 44 graded stakes in 10 regions. AQHA Corporate Partners and host racetracks contribute to the racing purses, making the Challenge the richest series of American Quarter Horse racing in the world. Winners in each region receive a starting position at the Challenge Championships, which run each fall. For more program details, call the Challenge Hotline at (877) AAA-RACE.



may be offered, including young horses, geldings, mares and stallions. Horses in production sales are often bred similarly, or have similar purposes in mind, offering a basis for comparison. These are excellent opportunities to buy quality; however, horses with extensive training in a particular discipline may not be offered.

Consignment

In consignment sales, a variety of horses have been consigned by their owners to be sold. The advantage of consignment sales is that they offer horses of different ages, sex and training. The disadvantage is that these horses are obtained from a variety of backgrounds, so you may not have access to information on disposition and training level. Because there is little time to view the horse once he or she is in the ring, it is a good idea to arrive prior to the sale. If you find a horse you are interested in purchasing, try locating the owner and discussing such characteristics as disposition, health and past performance.



Racing

Unlike any other type of sale, racing sales feature horses specifically bred for racing. The most popular type of sale features yearlings — horses between 12 and 24 months of age — who are in training to be raced as 2-year-olds. “Mixed sales” feature both racing stock and breeding stock, in addition to weanling prospects. Prices largely depend on market demand for certain bloodlines and the potential of each horse.

Dispersal

Dispersal sales may offer a unique opportunity to purchase a breeder’s lifetime efforts. Like a production sale, a dispersal ordinarily features stock owned by one particular person or entity, with the age, sex and training of the horses varying. Because this may be the first, or last, opportunity to purchase from a reputable entity, prices for these horses may be higher than at production or consignment sales.

Other locations for finding horses for sale include:

- *Equine listings in newspapers*
- *“Trading posts” in feed and tack stores*
- *The American Quarter Horse Journal and The American Quarter Horse Racing Journal*
- *Local equine veterinarian*
- *State/Provincial American Quarter Horse Affiliates*
- *Internet*

Professionals

Professionals, such as trainers, can serve as agents for prospective buyers, in addition to training horses and instructing clients. By discussing your needs in a horse and your skills, a trainer may help locate a horse that best fits your goals. Trainers usually charge a commission for helping you find a horse.

Professionals can help beginners select a horse. The need for a consultant is two-fold. A consultant can help you locate, evaluate and negotiate a prospective purchase. A consultant also can evaluate your skill as a rider and give you information on your chosen discipline.

You can find a professional in your area by calling (877) 4aHORSE and asking for a referral to AQHA's Professional Horsemen Association, or visit 4aHORSE.com. Beginners should try to find a professional who works well with beginners, or who has expertise in your chosen discipline.

Some helpful questions to ask a professional are:

- *What experience do you have in the horse industry?*
- *What experience do you have in my chosen discipline?*
- *Who else have you helped and what kind of success have they had under your guidance?*
- *How are your fees structured?*
- *What references do you have from other professionals?*

When you retain a professional to aid you with your riding and competition, be sure to explain your goals thoroughly to your professional, and discuss candidly how much you can afford for purchasing a horse, feed, board, veterinary care and other considerations.

Visiting a Breeder or Owner

Once you have found a prospective horse to buy, there are steps you can follow to aid in the purchasing process. If you are visiting the farm of a breeder, owner or professional, it's a good idea to start by talking to the seller and establishing good rapport.

4aHORSE Program

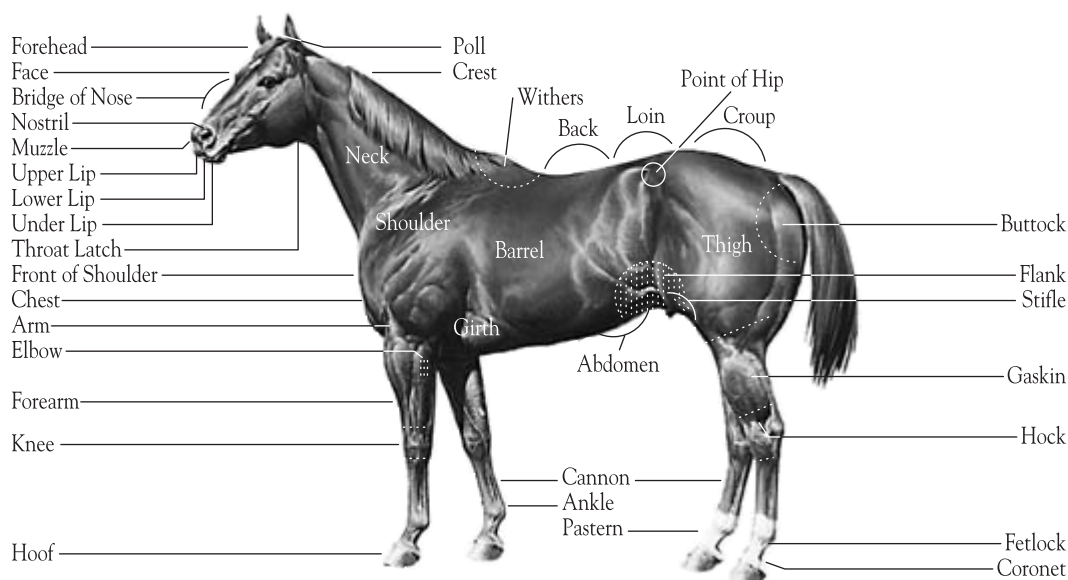
AQHA members and customers can call (877) 4aHORSE or log onto 4ahorse.com and receive a free referral to members of AQHA's 4aHORSE program. This program can give you a referral to professionals in your area who can help you with all your training needs. From training the horse to training the rider, AQHA's 4aHORSE members are respected professionals in the equine industry who have pledged to follow the program's strict code of ethics.

Some excellent questions to ask the seller are:

- *How much has the horse been ridden during the past year?*
- *Who has ridden the horse the most — trainer, amateur, youth?*
- *How easy is the horse to handle after being turned out for a while and not ridden?*
- *What kind of equipment has been used?*
- *How much training has the horse received and in what areas?*
- *Where has the horse been stalled?*
- *What type of feed and roughage does the horse eat and what is the feeding schedule?*
- *What kind of health (good, bad) has the horse had during the past year?*
- *Has the horse ever had any colic episodes?*
- *How often is the horse dewormed or shod?*
- *Does the horse have any vices (i.e., cribbing, biting, trailer shyness)?*
- *How often has the horse been away from home, and what is his behavior in different surroundings?*
- *How does the horse react when being shod, clipped or dewormed?*
- *And the best question — Why is the horse for sale?*

The Evaluation Process

After you've identified and targeted a goal for yourself, and located a prospective horse, the next step is an evaluation process whereby you determine if that horse will allow you to accomplish your goal — call it determining “suitability for purpose.” While it's safe to say that any horse with acceptable past performance in your chosen endeavor is suitable for purpose, even beginners should have a basic understanding of the factors that influence a horse's abilities within a given activity and utilize this information in the evaluation process. What are those factors? Generally, it can be said there are three: conformation, movement and disposition.



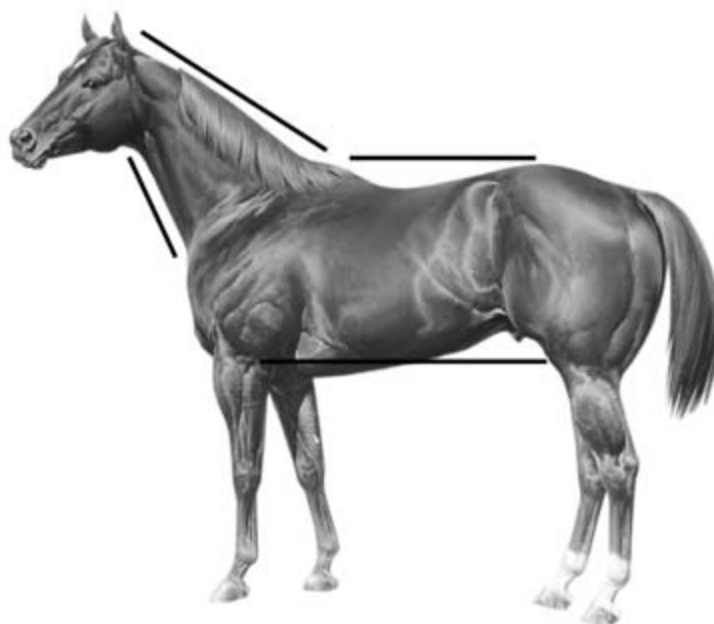
Conformation

One of the most important criteria in selecting a horse for purchase is conformation, or physical appearance. While it could be assumed that most horses with several years' seasoning and past performance have acceptable conformation, your goal in selection should always be to find the best conformed horse possible, regardless of past performance. The reason? Horses with less-than-perfect conformation may encounter health problems as they mature or when stressed by competition.

Rating conformation depends upon objective evaluation of the following four traits: balance, structural correctness, degree of muscling, and breed and sex characteristics. Of the four, balance is the most important, and refers to the structural and aesthetic blending of body parts. Balance is influenced almost entirely by skeletal structure.

To gain a better understanding of ideal balance in an American Quarter Horse, there are several helpful ratios that may be drawn in your mind's eye. Start by viewing a horse from its profile, and imagine a straight line determining length of back (the distance from point of withers to croup) and one along the length of underline (point of elbow to stifle). Ideally, the length of back should be one-half that of the underline. Next, draw an imaginary line down the top line of the neck (the distance from poll to withers) and the bottom line (the distance from throat latch to neck/shoulder junction). Ideally, the top-to-bottom-line ratio of neck should be 2-to-1. Horses who deviate greatly from these two important ratios, becoming 1-to-1, are often deemed unbalanced.

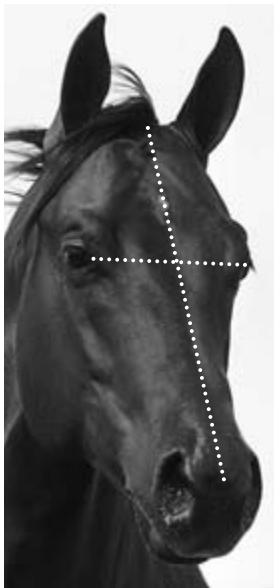
What causes the deviations? Nothing is more critical to balance than slope of shoulder. When the shoulder becomes more vertically sloping, or "straighter," it shortens the top-to-bottom-line ratio of the neck. The withers move forward as the shoulder becomes straighter, resulting in a longer back. Thus, the straight-shouldered horse has the appearance of being a tube.



Since a short top line and long underline are desirable, it is incorrect to compare shorter horses to taller horses, because horses of different sizes should not have the same length of body or underlines. The ratios are important in determining balance, and these are directly affected by the slope of the shoulder. Moreover, when the shoulder is straight, other structural angles in a horse's body become straight, resulting in a horse with a short, steep croup, straight stifle and straight pasterns. These latter traits are undesirable and contribute to a horse's lack of balance.

As balance is directly related to structure, the poorly balanced horse often lacks structural correctness and fundamental soundness. In general, the angle of the pasterns will correspond almost identically with the angle of shoulder, so that a horse with too much slope to his or her shoulder also has weak, sloping pasterns. This condition, called "coon-footed," may be so severe as to allow the horse's fetlocks to hit the ground as the horse moves. The ideal slope of shoulder is approximately 45 to 50 degrees; however, the angle may vary from ideal. You should not be overly influenced in demanding exact degree of slope of shoulder. Instead, concentrate on balance and blending of structure.

Once you have evaluated a horse's overall balance, then structure, muscling, and breed and sex characteristics can be more definitively evaluated by examining individual body components, starting with the horse's head.



Head

A horse's head provides insight into a horse's total conformation, as well as his or her behavior. In general, there is no physiological benefit to having a "pretty head" on a horse. However, most people don't like an "ugly head" on a horse, so selection is based upon beauty. What makes an attractive head? The set of ears, shape of eye, size of nostril, depth of mouth and overall proportionality of the head are important considerations.

Another useful tip in evaluating a horse's head is to visually measure the distance from the horse's poll to an imaginary horizontal line between the eyes. Ideally, this distance is approximately one-half the distance from the horizontal line to the midpoint of the nostril. Thus, the eyes will be positioned one-third the distance from the horse's poll to muzzle. When the width across the orbit of the horse's skull is measured, that distance should be almost identical to the distance from the poll to the line between the eyes. The ears should be proportional to the horse's head and sit squarely on top of the head, pointing forward with an alert appearance. Any deviation in placement or carriage of the horse's ears detracts from the beauty of the head, and thus, the horse's overall beauty. Because horses are proportional, length of head is the same percentage of height for both tall and short horses. Therefore, the term "long headed" is somewhat a misnomer, as long heads are simply indicative of tall horses.

The head has qualities that are important when evaluating other factors, including behavior. Most notably, the eye provides insight into a horse's disposition. Large, quiet, soft eyes normally indicate a docile disposition, while small, "pig" eyes are associated with horses that are sullen and difficult to train. Look for a bright, tranquil eye with a soft, kind expression.



For American Quarter Horses, bulging, well-defined jaws are preferred, particularly in stallions, who are naturally deeper and bolder-jawed than mares. Pretty-headed horses will always have a well-defined muzzle, flaring into a refined chin and prominent jaw. For beauty's sake, look for large, flaring nostrils. Regarding depth of mouth, many horsemen indicate that the shallower the mouth, the softer and more reactive the horse. Guard against horses who are thick-lipped and heavy across the bridge of the nose, for these are often less responsive to the bridle. Finally, make sure the horse is not parrot-mouthed (upper teeth in front of and over the lower teeth) or monkey-mouthed (lower teeth in front of the upper teeth).

Neck

After evaluating the horse's head, move on to the neck. The throat latch should be trim and refined, with the depth being equal to one-half the length of the head. If the horse is thick in the throat latch, flexion at the poll is restricted, and thus, the horse may be prevented from carrying his head correctly during competition because of an inability to breathe correctly.

Some horsemen talk about "long, thin necks," when in reality, priority should be given to horses with an appropriate top-line to bottom-line neck ratio. Again, the top line of the neck to bottom line should be 2-to-1 on a balanced horse. Invariably, horses with shorter necks are shorter-bodied, and because the horse is connected from its poll to tailset, a horse with a shorter neck may lack the flexion and suppleness desired for more advanced training.

Shoulder

In addition to overall balance, the slope of the shoulder influences the length of stride. Thus, the straighter the shoulder, the shorter the stride. The angle of shoulder and pastern also serve to absorb shock when the horse moves. The straight-shouldered horse also will be shallow-hearted, as measured from top of withers to chest floor. Unlike the balanced horse, with legs that will measure approximately the same length as depth of heart, the straight-shouldered horse's legs will be longer than depth of heart. A straight-shouldered horse will always feel rough when ridden compared to a horse with a desirably sloping shoulder.

Withers

The ideal withers are sharp, prominent and slightly higher than the horse's hindquarters or croup. A balanced horse will appear to be sloping downhill from front to back. When the withers are higher than the croup, the hindquarters are properly positioned under the body and contribute to athletic ability. Strength of the top line, over the back, loin and croup, also is important in athletic ability and overall balance and soundness.

Barrel

As you view a horse from the front, always evaluate spring of rib and depth of heart, as they indicate athletic capacity. Select against horses who have a "pinched," flat-ribbed look, who do not have a rounded, convex look to their rib cages.

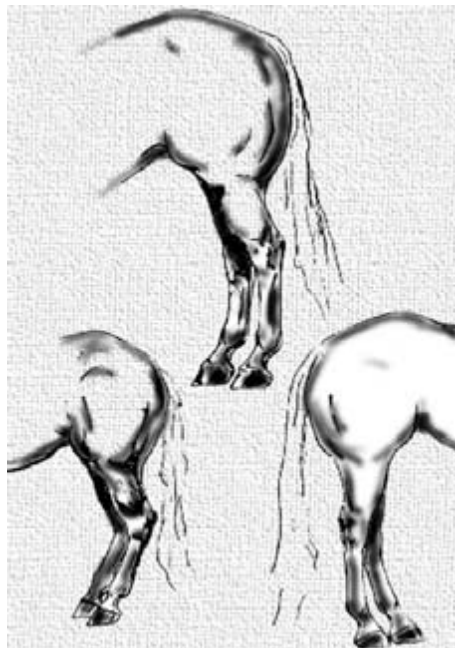
Hindquarters

When viewed from the side, the hindquarters should appear square. How the corners of the square are filled in will depend on the breed, with American Quarter Horses being more desirably muscled when the hindquarters complete the square. The croup should not be too flat (resulting in too much vertical action in movement) nor too steep (associated with a collected, but very short, choppy stride).

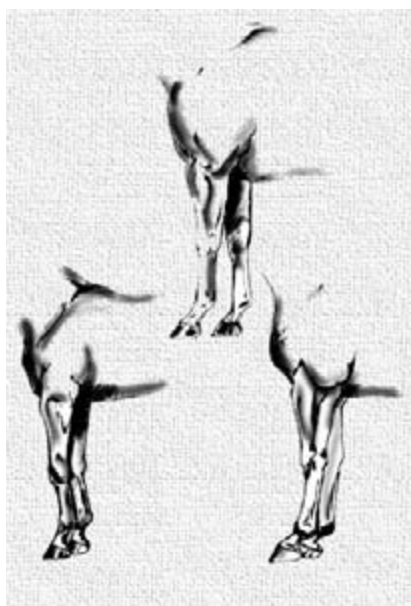
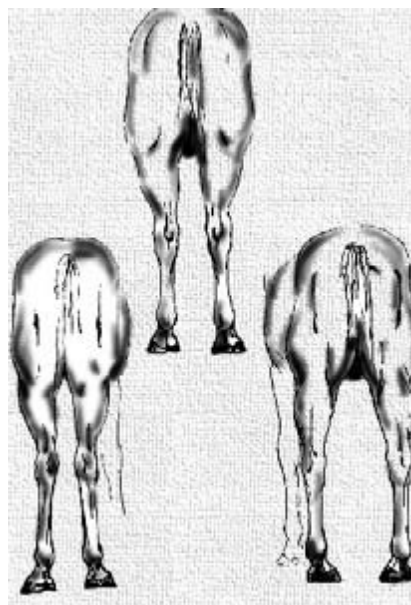
The ideal American Quarter Horse has a hindquarter that is as full and as long from across the horizontal plane of the stifle as it is from point of hip to point of buttocks. Muscling is an important criteria in judging conformation of American Quarter Horses. It is important to realize that muscling is proportional (i.e. as one muscle in the body increases, total muscle mass increases). Horses visually appraised as heavily muscled generally have greater circumference of forearm, gaskin and width of hindquarter than lightly muscled horses. The horse is a balanced athlete that is muscled uniformly throughout.

Feet and Legs

Structure of feet and legs are major considerations when evaluating a horse's conformation. When standing beside the horse, drop an imaginary line from the point of the buttocks to the ground. Ideally, that line should touch the hocks, run parallel to the cannon bone and be slightly behind the heel. The horse with too much angle to his hocks is **sickle-hocked**, and the horse that is straight in his hocks is **post-legged**.

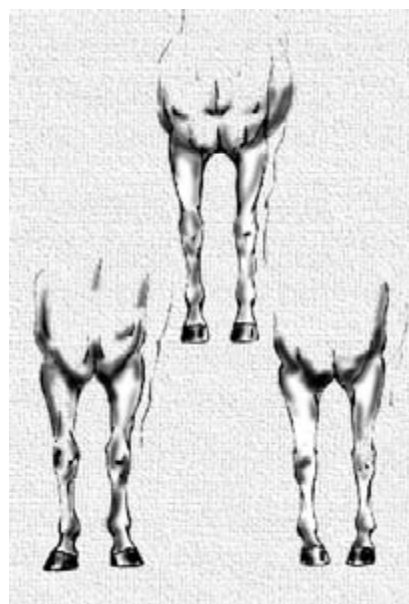


Ideally, when viewed from the rear, any horse should be widest from stifle to stifle. Another imaginary line from the point of the buttocks to the ground should bisect the gaskin, hock and hoof. It is not critical that a horse be perfectly straight from the ankles down as viewed from the rear. In fact, most horses naturally stand with the cannons parallel and toe out slightly from the ankles down. This allows the horse's stifle to clear his ribcage in flight, resulting in a longer-striding, free-moving horse. However, when a horse is bowed inward at the hocks and the cannon bones are not parallel, it is **cow-hocked**. The horse that is cow-hocked has a tendency to be weak in the major movements that require work off the haunches such as stopping, turning, sliding, etc. Occasionally, there are horses that actually toe-in behind and are **bow-legged**, most of which are very poor athletes.



The horse should stand on a straight column of bone with no deviation when viewed from the side. A horse that is “over at the knees” is **buck-kneed**, and the horse that is “back at the knees” is **calf-kneed**. Calf-kneed is the most serious condition since the knee will have a tendency to hyper-extend backward.

When the horse is viewed from the front, an imaginary line from the point of the shoulder to the toe should bisect the knee, cannon bone and hoof, with the hoof pointing straight ahead. When a horse **toes out**, it is **splay-footed** and the horse will always **wing in** when traveling. When a horse **toes in**, it is **pigeon-toed** and that horse will always **paddle out**. The most serious of these is the horse that wings in. If the cannon bone is off-centered to the outside, it is **bench-kneed**.



Soundness and Structure

All horses should be serviceably sound. In young animals, there should be no indication of defects in conformation that may lead to unsoundness. An unsoundness is defined as any deviation in structure that interferes with the usefulness of an individual. **Many horses will have blemishes — abnormalities that may detract from the appearance of the animal — but are sound.** You should become familiar with all of the common unsoundnesses and learn to recognize them.

Riding and Movement

After a basic evaluation of conformation, the next step is evaluating a horse's movement. Movement is an important criteria, particularly when selecting a horse for performance events, as most arena classes place some level of preference on movement.

For even a beginning recreational rider, a horse should at least walk, trot, lope, and accept leads in both directions. The horse should stop easily when asked “whoa” by the rider and yield to leg aids. Ideally, horses should also demonstrate the following:

- *The walk must be alert, with a stride of reasonable length in keeping with the size of the horse.*
- *The trot should be square, balanced and with straight, forward movement of the feet.*
- *The lope should be a natural, three-beat stride and appear relaxed and smooth. Horses should accept both leads and change with little difficulty.*

In selecting a horse for arena performance, consider the following criteria:

Western — The horse should have a free-flowing stride of reasonable length in keeping with conformation. The horse should cover a reasonable amount of ground with little effort and carry his head and neck in a relaxed, natural position, with the poll level with or slightly above the level of the withers. Ideally, the horse should have a balanced, flowing motion and be responsive to the rider's commands, yet smooth in transition of gaits and leads.

English — The horse should move with long, low strides reaching forward with ease and smoothness, being able to lengthen stride and cover ground with relaxed, free-flowing movement. Horses should be obedient, have a bright expression with alert ears and respond willingly to the rider with light leg and hand contact. When asked to extend the



trot or canter, the horse should move out with the same flowing motion. The poll should be level with, or slightly above the withers. The head should be slightly in front of, or on the vertical.

Reining or similar advanced disciplines — The horse should be willfully guided or controlled with little or no apparent resistance and be responsive to the rider's commands. Any movement on his own must be considered a lack of, or temporary loss of, control. The horse should be smooth, demonstrating finesse, attitude, quickness and authority in performing various maneuvers while using controlled speed.

Disposition

Probably the most important and most abstract aspect of the evaluation process is determining a horse's disposition. While American Quarter Horses have been selectively bred for generations for good disposition and most often possess an inherently gentle nature, you still must place importance on this in the selection process. The reason? While a horse may be impeccably conformed and move like a champ, he still may not possess the correct frame of mind that will allow both you and the horse to realize your true potential.

Evaluating disposition is particularly important for beginners. It can be frustrating to ride a horse who simply isn't cooperative. The rider may lose confidence and become afraid — the horse simply becomes confused. Often, both problems multiply if not corrected via professional help.

While evaluating some conformational traits may help determine disposition, the best method is seeing how a horse behaves when being groomed, saddled, ridden and trailered. While the seller's opinions may be helpful, use your own eyes. Observe the horse being groomed, saddled and trailered. Does the horse:



- Stand quietly when approached by the seller and yourself, or does he flinch or draw back?
- Halter or bridle without difficulty?
- Paw, set back or lie down when tied?
- Accept the saddle?
- Stand patiently as a rider mounts?
- Load easily into a trailer?

Any signs of nervousness, pawing, bucking in place, biting or refusal to comply during grooming, saddling or trailering should be considered faults on the part of the horse. Since the horse may respond correctly with the owner, ask the owner if you may perform these tasks yourself, if you feel comfortable doing so.

Next, evaluate the horse's disposition during riding. Does the horse:

- *Walk, trot and lope, and accept these gaits willingly?*
- *Take both right and left leads easily?*
- *Respond and stop when asked to whoa, or when pressure is applied to the bit?*
- *Back without straining against the bit?*
- *Follow your commands, or act on its own?*

The horse's disposition during riding is largely dependent upon the rider's skill. While beginning riders may experience varying levels of resistance or loss of control when performing the aforementioned tasks, at no time should the horse buck or act as if he is running off. Ideally, the horse should perform all requirements willingly, with little or no resistance on the bit. Any bracing or straining against the bit should be considered faults.

If you are a beginner, or even an intermediate horse person, it is always a good idea to have a professional with you if you choose to groom, saddle or ride a horse. Ask the owner if your professional can ride the horse. As with any diagnostic process, you are always better off with a second opinion.

A good thing to keep in mind through the entire evaluation process is this: Remember that you are buying not only a horse, but a relationship with a horse. All horses have different personalities, and it's your goal to find a horse that best complements your personality. While conformation, behavior and movement all play a role in the horse's suitability for purpose and personality, the final analysis often relies on one simple question: How am I getting along with this horse? The answer often is derived strictly from intuition.

Purchasing a Horse

Purchase Exam

If a horse seems like a good prospect and meets your approval through the evaluation process, **you may want to arrange to have a purchase examination performed by an experienced equine veterinarian.** You can contact the American Association of Equine Practitioners at (800) GET-ADVM ((800) 438-2386) to find an experienced Equine Veterinarian in your area.

The purchase exam may involve X-rays and a variety of diagnostic techniques, but all should include examinations of the following:

- *Eyes and head*
- *Nose*
- *Mouth and teeth*
- *Ears*
- *Tail (for compliance with AQHA rules)*
- *Back and neck*
- *Legs*
- *Ankles and hooves*
- *Heart and lungs*
- *Hocks and knees*



Although the veterinarian's findings may or may not affect your buying decision, it is always a good idea to have a purchase exam performed in order to have an experienced medical professional evaluate a potential purchase.

Physical Conditions to be Cautious of when Buying a Horse Your Guide for Future Reference

Condition: Laminitis (founder)

Symptoms: Inflammation of the hoof, usually affecting front feet.

Affected horse stands with hind feet bunched together under the body with head low and back arched, rocking. Front feet are placed forward so weight is on heel of the foot. Difficult to get horse to move, and then gait is shuffling. Noticeable heat rings on horse previously affected.

Cause: Numerous factors that may include excessive consumption of grain, water and grass; concussion to the feet due to hard work or fast work on hard surfaces; symptomatic infections.

Treatment: Reduced diet, anti-inflammatory drugs.

Affect on use: May reoccur but can be managed if caught early. Horses with laminitis may be used for light riding depending on the severity of the condition.

Condition: Navicular disease

Symptoms: Both front feet affected. Horse stands with both feet too far in front or points alternately with affected toe. When walking, the affected toe lands first resulting in a choppy stride. Bone and tendons develop adhesions that cause pain and lameness.

Cause: Upright conformation may weaken the navicular bone resulting in misalignment of bones in feet and pasterns. Excessive concussions to the hoof also may increase chances of navicular disease.

Treatment: Anti-inflammatory drugs, corrective shoeing. Neurectomy (cutting of nerve to delete pain) offers a more permanent solution.

Affect on use: Amount of work dictates suitability. The more stressful the workout, the higher the chance of a horse going lame.

Condition: Parrot-mouth

Symptoms: Overlapping of the upper jaw, resulting in overgrown front teeth, malnutrition.

Cause: Inherited condition.

Treatment: Little can be done to rectify the problem.

Affect on use: Horses such as these have difficulty eating. AQHA will issue registration certificates for horses who have this condition. However, horses with this condition, foaled on or after January 1, 1992, shall have this condition designated on their registration certificate and the records of AQHA. It is the responsibility of the owner to report said condition to AQHA upon its discovery.

Condition: Ringbone

Symptoms: Lameness, swelling of pastern area.

Cause: New bone growth at surface of pastern bones resulting from trauma to joints by excessive use or direct blows to pastern areas.

Treatment: Can be verified through X-ray. Anti-inflammatory drugs, rest and denervation.

Affect on use: Lameness may result with ringbone, restricting activities.



Condition: Cryptorchid

Symptoms: One or both testes haven't descended into scrotum; aggressive behavior in geldings; subfertile stallions.

Cause: Blockage prevents testicle(s) from descending; inherited condition.

Treatment: Surgical removal of retained testicle(s); castration.

Affect on use: This condition does not pose a threat to a horse's

performance. AQHA will issue registration certificates to stallions that are cryptorchid. However, stallions with this condition, foaled on or after January 1, 1992, shall have this condition designated on their registration certificate and the records of AQHA. It is the responsibility of the owner to report said condition to AQHA upon its discovery.

Condition: Hyperkalemic periodic paralysis (HYPP)

Symptoms: Unpredictable attacks of paralysis, muscle tremors, shaking, trembling and weakness. Attacks can range from mild to severe and, in some cases, cause collapse and/or death.

Cause: Hereditary genetic defect that affects the muscle cells' balance of sodium and potassium. Defect has been traced to the stallion Impressive.

Treatment: HYPP can be managed by proper diet, exercise and medication. A DNA test has been developed to identify horses carrying the defective gene.

Affect on use: With proper management, horses afflicted with HYPP can lead productive, useful lives. AQHA regulations require that a statement of possible HYPP inheritance be placed on all registration certificates of foals traced to Impressive born after January 1, 1998. The statement will recommend testing to determine if the foal has the genetic defect. If the foal's genetic tests show it does not carry the defective gene, the statement on the registration certificate will be removed and replaced with an N/N designating the foal does not have the defective gene. Breeding horses descending from Impressive that have already been tested and listed as N/N will not need to have their foals tested, and the foals will have N/N on their registration certificate.

Price

All things considered, your goal is to purchase the most broke, seasoned horse you can afford with suitable conformation, disposition and movement. Keep in mind, however, that a broke and unsound horse is likely less valuable than an unbroke and sound horse. Look for the horse that is the closest to ideal. Keep in mind that seasoned geldings are best suited for beginners, as they tend to be more gentle.

Also take into consideration pedigrees and past performance. Pedigrees and performance records may add value, but how do they relate to your intended use? For example: a racehorse that has won money on the track may not be suitable as a recreational riding horse. Always keep your ultimate goal close at hand when discussing purchasing price with the owner. If the horse doesn't fit your objectives, don't invest your money.

As a rule, pricing is based upon the following factors, so a good understanding of their relationship to price is in order:

- *Level of training — More training normally means a higher price.*
- *Pedigree — The closer and more often a horse has accomplished performers in his or her pedigree, the higher the price.*
- *Past performance — Greater levels of past performance normally mean higher prices.*
- *Sex — Stallions and mares are normally higher priced, due to reproductive potential.*
- *Age — Young horses (1-4 years of age) are often higher priced due to their “potential,” although horses above the age of 10 may be more valuable due to seasoning or suitability for purpose.*

In the end, the amount of money you will likely pay for a horse is directly related to the goals established at the beginning of the buying process. Although there is no concrete formula for pricing, the following are acceptable ranges which you can expect to pay:

- *Recreational, broke, gentle gelding:* \$1,000 to \$3,000
- *Arena performer, suitable for local competition as evidenced by past performance:* \$3,000 to \$7,500
- *Arena performer, skilled for national competition as evidenced by past performance:* \$10,000 and upward

After the Sale — AQHA Transfer Procedures

If a horse is registered with AQHA, any transaction regarding the sale or transfer of ownership should be recorded with the Association. It is the seller's responsibility to complete the written report to be sent to AQHA immediately following the transaction, whether the horse was sold through private treaty or an auction.

It is recommended that you purchase directly from the last recorded owner listed on the registration papers. If you do not purchase the horse from the last recorded owner, then you must have a transfer signed by the recorded owner as well as transfers signed by each owner between yourself and the recorded owner. Also,

make sure the horse you are buying matches the registration papers. Note age, sex, color and all markings. The horse's registration papers and proper fees must be included when filing the transfer report. Payment of transfer fees can be negotiated between you and the seller.

If the horse being bought is not yet registered (however, always try to buy registered horses), then the name, registration numbers of the sire and dam, and other data should be included on a registration application, to be completed by the breeder. Understand that registration fees double after a horse is 7 months old and double again after 12 months. The registration fees are at least doubled each year after that until the horse is 4 years old. We point this out so you will understand the high cost of registering older horses and avoid purchasing unregistered older horses.



Owner Responsibilities

As the owner of an American Quarter Horse, care and treatment of your horse is your responsibility. The care and humane treatment of American Quarter Horses is so important to AQHA that it is listed as a major commitment of the Association.

Every American Quarter Horse shall, at all times, be treated humanely and with dignity, respect and compassion.

Stringent rules established and enforced by AQHA demand that American Quarter Horse breeders, owners, trainers and exhibitors are continually responsible for the well-being and humane treatment of any American Quarter Horse entrusted to their care.

Above all, the American Quarter Horse's welfare is paramount to other considerations and the continual development of procedures which ensure humane treatment of the breed and fair competition supersedes all other concerns.

Neglect and outright abuse of American Quarter Horses should be reported to local government authorities who are responsible for enforcing local animal welfare laws. Sometimes animals are abused out of ignorance by well-intentioned people who just don't know the proper dietary and care requirements of their animals. This is why it is important to know how to care for your horse before you purchase one.

Horse ownership is a continuous learning process. The more you learn, the more you and your horse will benefit. Some of the best resources for improving your knowledge are *The American Quarter Horse Journal* and *The American Quarter Horse Racing Journal*. Each issue has regular columns on horse health care by equine veterinarians and articles on management, feeding and training tips that will increase your knowledge of proper horse care.

Discover Your Lifestyle

By choosing an American Quarter Horse as your equine companion, you'll find that the American Quarter Horse Association offers an array of programs and services that will add to your enjoyment of your horse. The Association sanctions more than 2,700 American Quarter Horse shows and special events annually across the country, which are divided into the following categories: Open (for all members, youth and adult, including professionals); Amateur (nonprofessional riders of similar skill levels, including Select exhibitors, age 50 and older); Youth (for exhibitors ages 18 and younger); and Novice (for both youth and amateurs who have not earned 25 AQHA points in a particular skill set).

Additionally, AQHA offers a Horseback Riding Program, whereby riders can earn awards for simply logging their hours spent riding or driving an American Quarter Horse or any other breed of horse! Also, American Quarter Horses are eligible for many awards and incentives when competing in non-AQHA competition, including the National Cutting Horse Association, National Reining Horse Association, Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, National High School Rodeo Association, and more.

What do these programs mean for you as an American Quarter Horse buyer? More opportunities, which translate to greater enjoyment of your horse. Plus, should you ever choose to sell your American Quarter Horse, the opportunities, incentives and programs AQHA offers will likely translate to a higher resale value when compared to an unregistered horse.

It is the goal of the American Quarter Horse Association to provide you with this helpful buying information to aid you in your search for the perfect equine partner and a lifetime of fun and enjoyment. All in all, you'll find the American Quarter Horse to be the most fun, safe, accessible and affordable equine breed around, traits that have made the breed the world's most popular.

AMERICAN
QUARTER
HORSE
ASSOCIATION

American Quarter Horse Association

Discover your lifestyle

RIDE PROGRAM

Saddle up on any horse and join us as we tour private ranches and great getaways as part of AQHA's Ride Program. More than 70 rides are held across the globe each year.

INCENTIVE FUND

The Incentive Fund is a multimillion-dollar awards program for the American Quarter Horse show industry. See page 1 for more details.

MBNA AMERICA® QUARTER HORSE RACING CHALLENGE

This purse and bonus awards program is centered around a series of 71 regional races culminating in the season-ending Challenge Championships. Once enrolled, a foal is eligible his or her entire life. See page 3 for more details.

HORSEBACK RIDING PROGRAM

AQHA members can earn recognition, gifts and awards by logging hours spent riding any American Quarter Horse. There's also a level offering rewards for members who ride other breeds!

4aHORSE

In an effort to begin educating members and helping all horse enthusiasts, AQHA has unveiled one of the most comprehensive equine referral programs, 4aHORSE. The 4aHORSE referral service offers every level of horse enthusiasts help in finding horses, professional trainers, riding instructors, breeders, veterinarians, educational opportunities and locations for horseback riding vacations. Visit 4aHORSE.com or call (877) 4aHORSE.

BEST OF AMERICA'S HORSE

This program recognizes outstanding American Quarter Horses in virtually every equestrian discipline, from jumping to barrel racing.

AQHA PUBLICATIONS

The American Quarter Horse Journal – monthly magazine including a list of shows, entry information and informative articles on all aspects of the American Quarter Horse industry.

The American Quarter Horse Racing Journal – monthly magazine featuring stories on people and horses whose passion is American Quarter Horse racing. Also included is coverage of the sport's greatest events.

America's Horse – AQHA's members-only bimonthly magazine with celebrity interviews, industry news, photos and fun tidbits.

INTERNET

Visit AQHA's Web site to see all the latest information on programs and services. Download many forms and applications directly to your computer at aqha.com.





“I joined a riding team called the Glory Riders. As a result, I found I was doing a lot of riding. I had seen the AQHA Horseback Riding Program advertised, so I looked in my AQHA handbook for more information. What I discovered was that I could do my favorite pastime – riding my horse – and earn lots of neat stuff. You log the hours spent riding your horse and earn awards. It’s that simple.”

“As I logged my hours online, I began to read the information about the AQHA Ride Program. You get double hours for any AQHA trail ride you attend. I have since been to AQHA rides in Texas, Missouri, Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa and Oklahoma. The ranches that opened their gates to the everyday trail riders have allowed me to create some very special friendships and see things you can’t see from an interstate highway.”

*Janice Tramel
Locust Grove, Oklahoma*

AMERICAN
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