



Is Horse Ownership Right for Me?

Horses can bring so much joy, and frustration at times, to their owners. Research documents time and time again the positive benefits that horses have on people's lives.

Did You Know? Approximately 1.96 million people own horses in the U.S. (*American Horse Council, 2005*). This figure will be updated in the 2017 Economic Impact Study.

So, you want to join the ranks of happy horse owners? That's great! But, first consider these questions before deciding if horse ownership is right for you. Horse ownership is a huge commitment.

Why do I want to own a horse?

There is no right answer, but understanding your true motivations for owning a horse will help you determine if there might be better options available. Do you want a horse for recreation or showing? Do you want one because your friends have one or because you've dreamed of owning a horse as a kid? Are you trying to earn money by breeding or racing? Do you want to save a horse in need?

How long do I plan to own my horse?

Many horses live for 20 years and some live more than 30. If you cannot make a 20-year commitment to a horse, you should know all the options and have a plan should you no longer be able to take care of it.

Will I need to relocate for any reason?

Moving with a dog or cat usually isn't too difficult, but moving an animal that weighs 1,000 pounds can be. If your lifestyle requires multiple relocations, be prepared for the expense and logistics of moving a horse.

Is the horse for my child? If yes, what will I do with the horse when my child leaves home?

Consider what will happen to the horse when your child leaves for college or moves out of the house. Will the horse be left at home? Will there be someone to take care of it? If your child is close to an age that he or she may leave home soon or his or her interests might change, leasing is a good option.

Do I have the knowledge and skills needed to care for all the horse's needs?

Despite the countless books, magazines, and websites available with tips and ideas for managing your horse, there is a set of knowledge and skills that you must have to care for a horse on your own property. In fact, many rescues and breeders will require that first-time horse owners board the horse at a site with knowledgeable staff. Seeking professional help from your veterinarian, farrier, and trainer is always in the best interest of the horse.

What will I do if the horse becomes sick or injured?

Illness and injury are more common with horses than most people realize. Some illnesses and injuries can be remedied with simple steps, and some can be career or life-ending. Few owners are equipped to handle a sick or injured horse on their own, and the best course of action is to contact your veterinarian. Be prepared to provide sometimes lengthy follow-up treatments or pay a knowledgeable horse person (e.g. barn manager) to help you.

Do I understand all the costs of ownership?

See "What is the Cost of Horse Ownership?" in this series to learn about the common and hidden costs of ownership. You'll be better prepared to make an educated decision.