

PIROUETTES (TWISTS & TURNS) IN HORSE TRADING!

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The old doctrine of *Caveat Emptor* or buyer beware (for those who have allowed their Latin to slip slightly!) applies nowhere more than in relation to the buying of horseflesh. It can also be extended to the selling of horses although I'm not fluent enough in Latin to know what the correct term is there! The intricacies of buying and selling horses are a minefield not for the fainthearted.

We will examine the whole process from both sides – that of the seller and the buyer and try and point out some of the obvious pitfalls to watch out for from both perspectives.

Selling a horse:

The selling of horses has evolved markedly since the introduction of the internet. In order to sell a horse previously you needed to place a classified ad in a magazine or newspaper, create flyers and post them on strategic bulletin boards, rely on word of mouth or risk going to auction. While these methods are still widely used (indeed, bear in mind that many potential buyers may not necessarily be computer literate and/or still prefer magazine classifieds) now you can market your horse from the comfort of your home. Equine trading sites are in abundance and are popular haunts for those looking to purchase their next horse.

A worldwide equine marketplace is the result, providing unlimited information to both potential buyers and sellers. In order to determine a suitable asking price for your horse, you can access numerous similar horses to yours and obtain a plausible guide to a reasonable price bracket.

Putting your advertisement online is child's play as it is to the advantage of most sites to be user friendly. Most will design the advertisement for you - there may be charges involved with this but your advertisement stands to look more professional and have more appeal. Remember a GOOD picture says a thousand words, so make sure you include photos or video footage of your horse. This may well also increase the price of your ad but could be the difference between a brief browse and a genuine contact from a prospective purchaser.

Equally for print media and the internet, ensure your photos are clear and cropped to suit - it very surprising to see so many people using poor quality and just down right bad photos which do nothing for your cause. Show your horse at his absolute best and keep your pictures relevant. If you are selling a show jumper, use your best possible jumping shot. It is always better to use one single photo that has impact than to use several shots that don't.

Always describe your horse as accurately and well as you can, mentioning your horse's attributes and vital information. Stating: age, sex, height, weight, colour and breeding. What the horse is trained to do: all around horse, dressage/show (list highest level of accomplishment), showhunter, show jumper or eventer (list height of jumping accomplishments. Who is the horse suitable for: all riders, novice or young riders, adult amateurs, small children, advanced riders only. List asking price. Unless the horse is extremely expensive I think it is fair to always list the asking price. You may add ono (or nearest offer) if you are flexible with your price and are a motivated seller. If you have a very expensive horse to advertise you may want to list the price as POA (price on application) and say

serious enquiries only but most buyers still like to have an indication.

A good use of colour in headlines is eye catching and primary colours work best. Use a strong worded headline eg: if your horse has great jumping technique, words like 'Talented Jumper' or if the horse has a good proven history of winning, then 'Proven Performer' is another good headline. For show and dressage horses, words like 'Extravagant Movement' are something that is hard to overlook. Use 'buzz' words such as: loads quietly, safe for children, clips easily, bombproof, won championships, exceptionally fast times, high scores, no vices, sound. Lastly - add your contact information. At the end of the ad make sure you have included a phone number and an email contact if possible.

Above all, make sure you don't ever misrepresent your horse. This only wastes yours and the buyers' time and if the horse is misrepresented this can have a legal comeback on you. Don't be tempted to guess his height and, if you are at all doubtful on this, have the horse measured - most A&P Societies have measuring days. Many a trip has been made in vain to view a pony that was either way too small or conversely likely to measure out of that class. If you are not sure, use the term "approximate" as then the onus is transferred to the purchaser. If the height is a major factor, the buyer may wish to get the animal officially measured.

Once a prospective buyer has made an appointment to see your horse, remember to allow yourself plenty of time to present your horse well. Have your horse thoroughly cleaned and looking beautiful when they show up. Some buyers like to see you catch your horse. Your horse should be shiny with his mane and tail combed out and feet oiled to look their best. You could have him uncovered, on the buyer's arrival, to show off the horse's conformation. Your tack and numnar should be clean and easily accessible. You can wash your horse the day before; there should be no excuses for not being well presented and ready. I recommend the horse is not saddled if the buyer is happy with the horse to be brought in before their arrival. Have any pertinent papers with you such as veterinary notes, vaccination and breed papers if necessary. Allow the buyer to watch you saddle your horse. Unless the buyer says differently, you should always ride your horse first.

There are pitfalls involved in selling horses, and the advent of online marketing brings its extra challenges. It is possible to waste a lot of time answering the queries of the chronic tyre kicker who has too much time on his hands and probably no real intention of buying your horse. This is further encouraged by the relative anonymity and easy accessibility of the net. These continual browsers can take some identifying at times!

Scarily there are some scams operating out of foreign countries where people will offer to buy your horse sight unseen. Be aware of the bouncing cheque, which is not identified until well after the horse has headed into the wide blue yonder. Never hand over possession of your horse to a stranger unless or until you are satisfied with the sale and payment terms. Be fully prepared, have all the horse's information available and offer this to the perspective purchaser.

As with all advertising, equine websites that feature classifieds operate as middlemen and are not responsible for any dispute that may arise between a buyer and seller.

Buying a horse:

Before embarking on your horse finding mission, you need to analyse exactly what it is you are looking for in your new horse. It is easy to spend days online searching through the available websites. It is important that you do your homework well and ask around about any horse you are thinking of purchasing.

Arguably, we all want the perfect horse for our chosen discipline and at a price we can live with. The ideal is often somewhere between the two and we need to determine which factors we are willing and able to compromise on.

There are always some qualities in our new horse that are non-negotiable. Most people do not want to end up with a horse who takes his bad temper out on us in the form of biting, kicking, bucking or any other anti-social means. This is particularly true when buying a horse for a young or nervous rider but be aware that, unfortunately, some horse sellers have no conscience in this regard.

It pretty much goes without saying that the horse must be in excellent health. His eye should be bright, his hooves strong and his legs as free from lumps, bumps or mysterious swellings as possible. (Scars are an unfortunate fact with most horses and it may be necessary, in cases of an unsightly scar, to identify if it affects the horse physically for the purpose you require). The horse also needs to have good eyesight, hearing and teeth.

In general, the final point in looking for a horse is one which is a good 'fit' for the rider. A number of variables come into this calculation – from the height and size of the horse to its suitability for the purpose you have in mind.

So, we have found a horse online that we think might suit – where to from here?

If you are planning to buy a horse, here are some tips to help you make an informed decision and counteract any problems hopefully before they become apparent.

Buyer beware:

Many people selling horses are honest and responsible as well as often very experienced. They will usually want to ensure their prized possession ends up in a suitable environment where both he and his new owner will be happy. Do not be tempted to exaggerate your experience or knowledge out of misguided pride when viewing your selected horse. This will be very obvious to the seller and if you are honest and upfront you will greatly encourage the seller to display those

traits as well. It will also save you any embarrassment, a little while down the track, if the horse proves to be too much for you.

Even if you have years of experience, it is highly recommended that you take another experienced horseperson with you to look at potential purchases. That person can take photos and/or video and help you focus on your buying criteria. They can also serve as an extra pair of eyes and ears to spot details you might miss. If you work with a trainer, make sure that your trainer goes out with you to look at the horse before you buy. When you make the appointment with the seller, ask to see the horse brought out of the stall or pasture, groomed, saddled and bridled (rather than the seller having the horse ready to ride when you arrive).

Make sure you are clear to the seller on what your exact intended use is for the horse. This will help to make sure there are no misunderstandings at the outset. Sadly, not all sellers are scrupulous and many have been known to display selective memory after the fact - so unfortunately there are no guarantees for the buyer. The seller however does have a responsibility to ensure the horse is suited to your purpose.

It is important to ask questions about the horse. This needs to cover any illness or disease the seller is aware of, along with any past or recent injury. The seller may not disclose this information upfront but should in theory answer specific questions honestly. If you are unsure as to what are the relevant questions to ask, take someone with you who does. I have always had blood taken the day I try a horse to ensure there are no sedatives running through its veins. If blood is taken there are all sorts of pathology available to you to give peace of mind. Vetting can take place at a later date if everyone is happy. Remember, if there is nothing to hide, then it won't be a problem.

When buying a pony for a child, I would advocate trying out a couple of different 'models.' While this is frustrating and time consuming for both you and the seller, it is well worth taking the time to see what exactly is available in your range and this will greatly assist you in making an informed choice. Many a child (or adult for that matter!) has fallen in love with the very first horse or pony they view for various nefarious reasons such as colour, name, or because they really really want a mount and just can't wait! This can and does result in expensive mistakes for the unwary.

A large proportion of sellers will not allow a pre purchase trial – generally



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2008/9 Multi Supreme titles



Alan Windle's - NALA EMBLEMS ZEPHYR

PROGENY WINNINGS 08/09 SEASON

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Brookfields Royale Affair

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SUPREME CHAMPIONS
Nala Nicolas Nicolberri
Laurieston Dream Chaser

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Glenn Stormont - PH: 09 298 7405 or EMAIL: bfrps@xtra.co.nz

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