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Most Common Mistakes Made By Horse Buyers

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Chamberlain Hrdlicka's specialized expertise in equine law can help successfully guide prospective horse buyers through a potential minefield of problems. Below is a simple checklist of horse buyers' top ten mistakes and how to avoid them.

1. Not Getting a Vet Check Because Of The Cost

Sellers can mask nearly any health problem with a little pharmaceutical help, so protect yourself with a full vet check before agreeing to the purchase of a horse.

2. Paying a Deposit Down on a Horse without a Written Agreement

Written agreements are critical to the success of a sale. Before any money changes hands the terms of the sale should be written out, including all contingencies; such as under what circumstances your deposit will be refunded or forfeited. Without a written agreement the sale could fall through and your deposit money could be history.

3. Not Reviewing the Registration Papers and Transfer Forms Carefully

Registration papers take the guesswork out of the integrity of a sale. A careful review of the papers and the transfer form can help avoid major headaches down the road. Be sure and check to make sure the papers match the horse you are buying, if the seller is the horse's registered owner, and if the registered owner has signed the transfer forms.

4. Buying a Horse Sight Unseen.

It is very tempting thanks to today's Internet economy, to select horses internationally based on Internet images and some video. It seems obvious that the selection of horses can be vastly improved by shopping nationwide and even internationally. However, technological advances have also made it easier than ever for unscrupulous horse sellers to unload their equine problems onto an unsuspecting buyer. Home computers can be used to mask problems with the horse and video-editing equipment can easily disguise behavioral issues involving performance. The best way to truly test the quality of a horse is to view it in person.

5. Taking a Horse on Trial without a Written Agreement.

Before the horse leaves its owner's property, there should be a written agreement describing the terms of the sale, including under what circumstances you can return the horse to the seller. Without that written agreement unsuspecting buyers often find

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themselves in a situation where they no longer want the horse and the seller won't take him back.

6. Buying a Horse Subject to a Vet Check without a Written Agreement.

A written agreement should always be the foundation of any sale, particularly one involving agreeing to purchase a horse subject to the outcome of a vet check. The agreement should describe the circumstances under which you will not be obligated to purchase the horse. Unlike used car inspections, Veterinarians rarely "pass" or "fail" a horse during a pre-purchase exam – typically, they simply inform you regarding the horse's health and condition. Therefore it needs to be understood by both the seller and purchaser ahead of time what constitutes a "passed" or "failed" pre-purchase exam.

7. Buying a Horse at Auction.

Auctions are full of great deals but there is an enormous risk involved. Auction terms typically do not allow for a pre-purchase examination by an independent veterinarian and most sales are "as is" with no recourse against the consignor or auction if there is something wrong with the horse.

8. Not Drawing a Blood Sample as Part of the Vet Check.

Artificial "enhancement" is very common in all aspects of the horse industry. Pharmaceutical aids can mask all kinds of health problems. Some aids are long lasting. That's why it is important to have a veterinarian draw blood during the pre-purchase examination and keep that blood sample at the clinic. The blood sample is then available for testing if the horse later experiences a sudden, inexplicable change in soundness or temperament. Without the blood sample, there will be little proof t the seller drugged the horse at the time of the sale.

9. Not Getting a Vet Check Because the Horse is Young.

Even if the horse is a weanling, there can still be issues affecting its long-term performance potential, and those issues are not always immediately apparent. A thorough veterinary evaluation can help you screen out potential problems.

10. Not Having Your Trainer or Instructor Evaluate the Horse.

Even an experienced horse person can benefit from professional advice. A trusted advisor can take you far but it is important to do your homework and make sure your equine investment is protected.

For more information, [click here](#) for a contact list of our equine law attorneys in Houston and Atlanta.

