

• **Way of Going.** Okay, so we've determined the horse has suitable conformation. While this means something, it doesn't mean everything. Some horses with perfect conformation have poor gaits; some horses with less than perfect conformation move beautifully. So it's important to watch the horse move naturally. Why naturally, and not under saddle? A horse moving under saddle shows you how he has been taught to move. A horse moving naturally shows you his potential.

In a perfect world, a horse should move smoothly and in balance. There should be no stiffness or crookedness.

Begin by standing behind the horse. Ask to have it led away from you and then back toward you on a loose rein. Next, ask to see it trotted away from you and toward you. Does the horse move close or behind in front or in back. Does it have cow hocks or pigeon toes? Does it have any other undesirable type of movement like dishing or winging?

If there is an issue, how bad is it, and will it affect the type of riding you want to do? A horse who dishes will last about two seconds in the show ring, for example, but might make a perfect jumper. But a horse who does something like drags his toes may have an unsoundness like a bone spavin. There is so much to look for. Thank goodness for your advisor!

• **Manners and Temperament.** You can observe the horse's manner and temperament by watching it as it is handled. The seller might allow you to participate in the grooming of the horse or she might not. Regardless, watch carefully how the horse behaves when it is caught, led, put in cross-ties,

groomed, and tacked. The first time you look at a horse it is perfectly appropriate to stand back and observe during the grooming and tacking phases. If the horse is going to bite someone, wouldn't you rather it someone other than you?

Someone he's on more intimate terms with, perhaps. If you come back subsequent times you should be allowed to groom and tack up the horse . . .

unless the seller is hiding a big secret! Here are a few things to look for when it comes to manners and temperament.

- Does the horse think being caught in the pasture is a big fun game? Ask the seller to set the horse free in the field and then catch him. If the seller is still chasing after the horse 15 minutes later and looking quite silly, the horse is certifiably hard to catch. If the horse is perfect in all other respects how much should this affect your decision? Well, hard to catch horses can be very annoying, but there are solutions.

- Does the horse push into and past you while walking in and out of its stable? Watch the seller lead the horse in and out of the barn, then in and out of a stall. Did he survive without being trampled? If the answer is yes, excellent! If the answer is no, this might be a deal breaker unless you are strong enough to control it while teaching it good manners.

- Does the horse bite? Observe while the seller handles the horse. Do the horse's teeth come in contact with any part of the seller? Does the seller yell "ouch!" Then the horse bites. This is a definite deal breaker if you are a child or a

The above is an excerpt from

“Buying A Horse 101”.

You may purchase the entire ebook at

www.my-horse-sense.com.