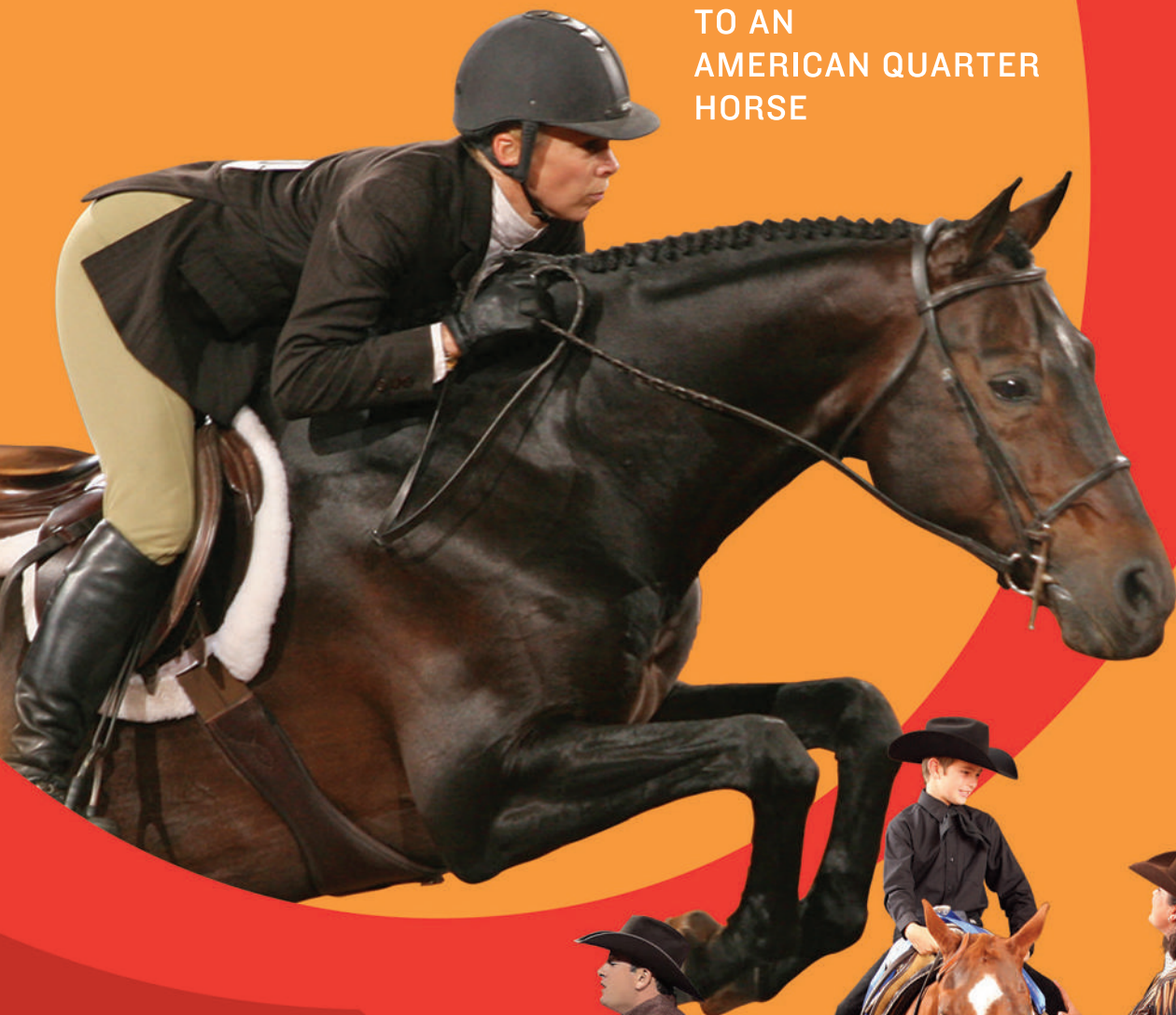


BUYER'S GUIDE  
TO AN  
AMERICAN QUARTER  
HORSE



AMERICAN  
QUARTER  
**HORSE**  
ASSOCIATION

**The American Quarter Horse Association**

celebrates the bond between horse and human and encourages everyone to experience this unique relationship. Whether you're riding for recreation, showing, racing or just want to spend time with the family – a membership in AQHA supports your horse and your horse activities. AQHA develops programs designed to give you the chance to enjoy more time with your American Quarter Horse. Plus, with great member benefits like *America's Horse* magazine, corporate partner discounts and complimentary internet records, it's an easy decision to make! Join AQHA today!

Call **888-414-RIDE** or visit [aqha.com](http://aqha.com).

AMERICAN  
QUARTER  
HORSE  
ASSOCIATION

## 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 a 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?*
- *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 – from 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 an equine partner. By calling 888-414-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.

### AQHA Incentive Fund

If you're planning to show your horse, it is to your advantage to look for a horse 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 and 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 small yearly license fee. Call AQHA for details on the program and a list of Incentive Fund breeders.

If you are interested in competing with your horse, visit an AQHA show or 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 riding skills. Would you categorize yourself as:

- *Beginner, 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 gentle, trained gelding or mare usually is best. 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 healthy, horse 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.

**To find out more:**  
**[www.aqha.com/new-horse-guide](http://www.aqha.com/new-horse-guide)**  
**To become a member:**  
**[www.aqha.com/membership](http://www.aqha.com/membership)**



Intermediate equestrians have more freedom of choice than beginners in that their horse should demonstrate fundamental activity requirements, 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.

## FINDING 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*
- *Understand the time and money responsibilities of horse ownership*

### BREEDERS

For an intermediate or advanced rider, one of the best sources for purchasing a horse is from a breeder. Breeders normally have on hand a selection of young horses from which the buyer can choose. 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. Breeders also have access to current owners who have purchased their sires and foals. Breeders can help riders find an appropriate horse to fit their needs.

### OWNERS

Another means to purchase a horse is directly from the owner. The owner can provide the horse's performance history and also may give helpful information regarding training and habits. 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.

### AQHA Professionals

Log on to [aqha.com/findatrainer](http://aqha.com/findatrainer) or call 800-399-0138 or call the Certified Horsemanship Association to locate breeders, riding instructors and professional trainers. This free service will help you find reputable breeders who can assist with purchasing a horse, instructors to teach you riding basics and trainers to help prepare you and your horse for competition.



### Bank of America® Racing Challenge

If you're looking for a horse to race, consider purchasing a horse enrolled in the Bank of America® Racing Challenge. The Challenge is a multimillion-dollar series with nearly 60 races throughout the year in 11 regions across the United States, Canada, Mexico and South America. American Quarter Horses compete in one of six different types of races, depending on their age and ability. 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. For more program details, call the Challenge Hotline at 877-AAA-RACE (222 7223).

## SALES

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 understand there are different types of sales, and not all may be the best place to purchase a horse.**



### Production

A production sale features horses produced by breeders. A variety of horses may be offered, including young horses, geldings, mares and stallions. Horses in production sales are usually 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 they offer horses of different ages, sex and training. The disadvantage is 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:

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

## 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; but in the long run, this can be money well spent.

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.

AQHA Professional Horsemen, as well as our friends at the Certified Horsemanship Association, can help match you up with the American Quarter Horse right for you. To find a professional near you go to [www.aqha.com/find-a-trainer](http://www.aqha.com/find-a-trainer). Beginners should try to find a professional who works well with beginners and 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, be sure to thoroughly explain your goals and discuss candidly how much you can afford for purchasing a horse, feed, board, veterinary care and other considerations.

## VISITING A BREEDER OR OWNER

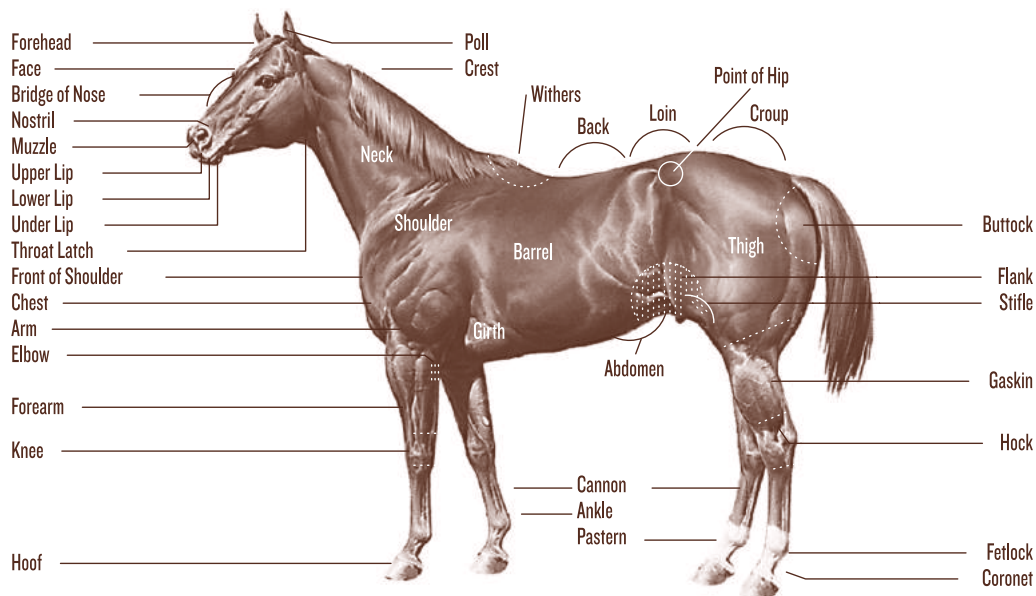
Once you have found a prospective horse to buy, there are steps you can follow to aid in the purchasing process. If you are visiting the farm of a breeder, owner or professional, it's a good idea to start by talking to the seller and establishing good rapport.

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? (bit, special equipment, i.e. martingale tie-down, saddle)*
- *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, kicking, pawing, pacing)?*
- *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?*
- *Has the horse been vaccinated, have a coggins, etc.?*
- *And the best question – Why is the horse for sale?*

## EVALUATING A HORSE

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.



## CONSULT A PROFESSIONAL

Evaluating horses on conformation, movement and disposition is not always easy for a beginner. When looking for your first horse, it is wise to have a professional or experienced horse person go along to help you with the evaluation process. We will provide some basic tips, but if possible, please seek assistance from others who can show you what to look for during the evaluation.

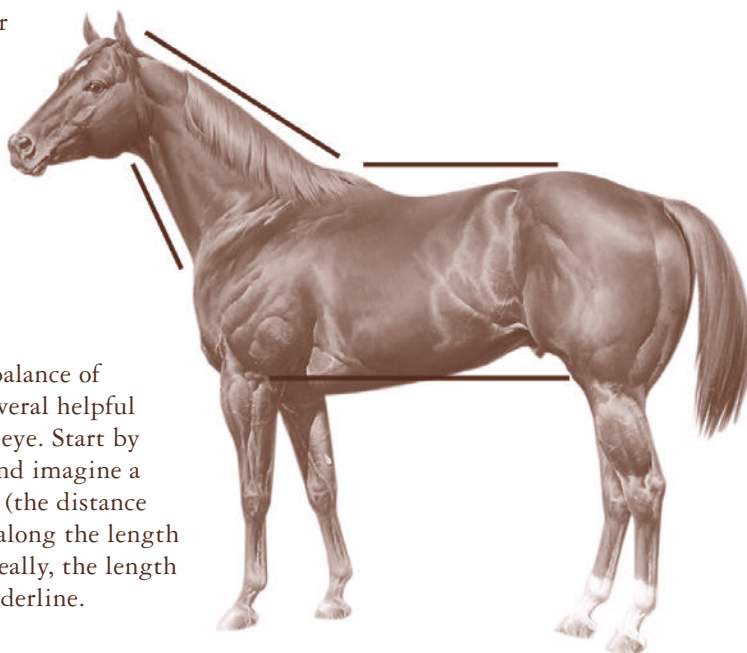
## CONFORMATION

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.

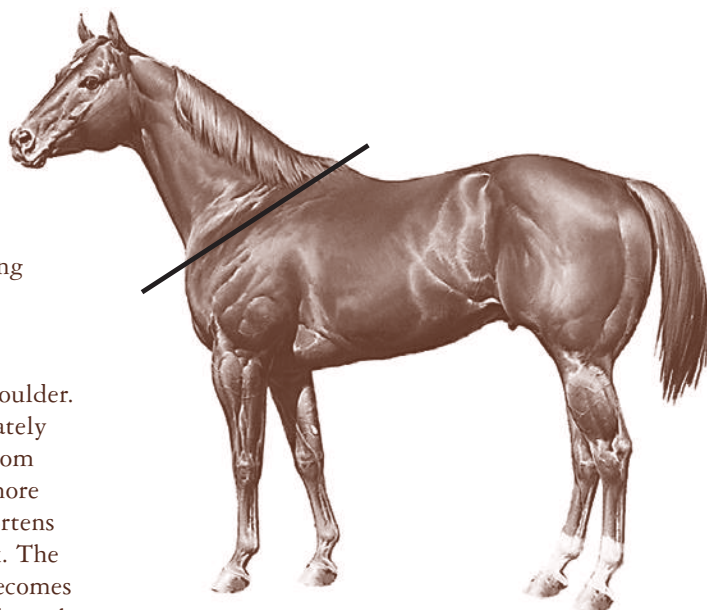
### Balance

To gain a better understanding of ideal balance of 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 (side), 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. The ideal slope of shoulder is approximately 45 to 50 degrees. The angle may vary from ideal, but 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. 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.

In general, the angle of the pasterns will correspond almost identically with the angle of the 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.

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.

You should not be overly influenced in demanding exact degree of slope of shoulder; instead, concentrate on balance and blending of structure.

### **Structural Correctness**

Structural correctness is determined by evaluating bone structure. This is especially important in horses’ feet and legs as these are the body parts that carry their weight and determine the soundness (health) of the horse and how they move.

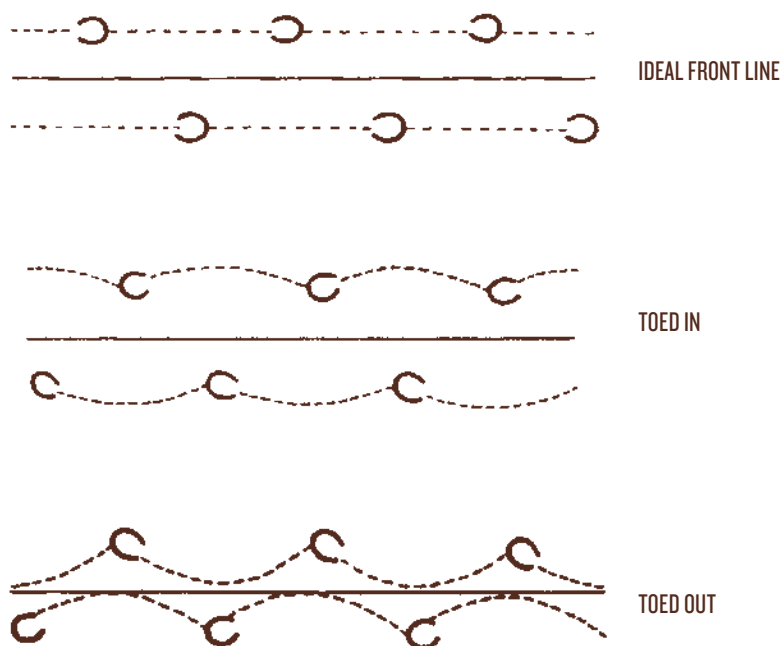
In determining structural correctness, we will compare horses to the ideal; however, most horses will not meet the ideal in every way. It is important to know what is acceptable depending on what the horse will be used for and how severe the structural deviation is.

All horses should be serviceably sound. In young animals, there should be no indication of defects in conformation that may lead to unsoundness. Basing upon the soundness scale 1-4, 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.

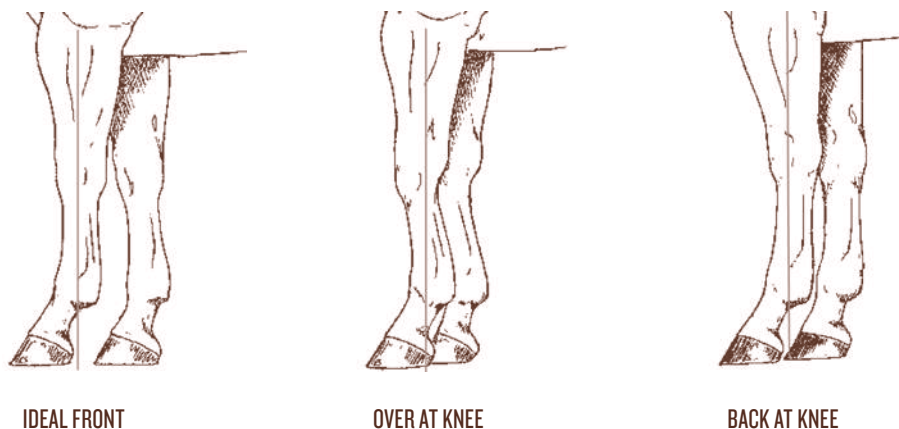


### *Front End*

When the horse is viewed from the front, an imaginary line from the point of shoulder to the toe should bisect the center of 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 when moving. The most serious of these is the horse that wings in due to a horse hitting himself and causing injury. If the cannon bone is off-centered to the outside, it is bench-kneed.

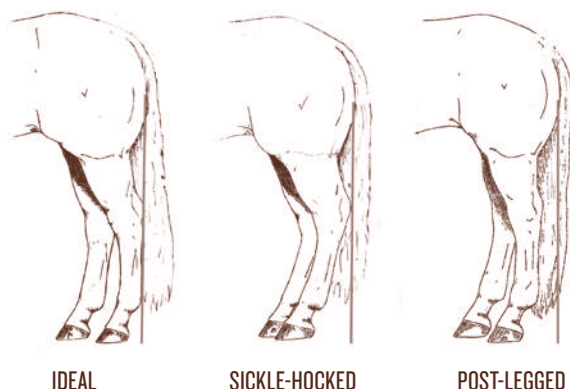


The horse should stand on a straight column of bone with no deviation when viewed from the side. A horse that is “over at the knees” is buck-kneed, and the horse that is “back at the knees” is calf-kneed. Calf-kneed is the most serious condition since the knee will have a tendency to hyper-extend backward.



### ***Hind End***

When standing beside the horse, drop an imaginary line from the point of 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. Either angular deviation can place added stress on hocks and pasterns, with an end result of unsoundness if the horse is used extensively under these stressful conditions.

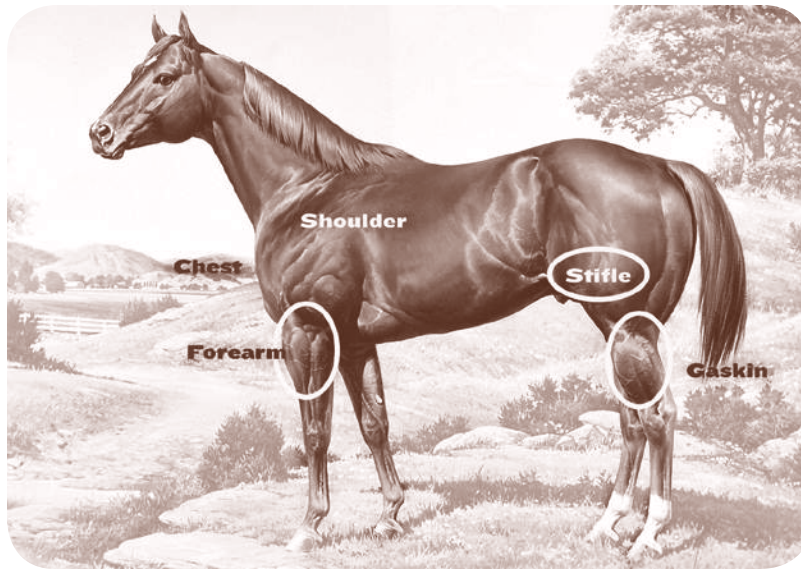


Ideally, when viewed from the rear, any horse should be widest from stifle to stifle. Another imaginary line from the point of buttocks to the ground should bisect the gaskin, hock and hoof. It is not critical that a horse be perfectly straight from the ankles down as viewed from the rear. In fact, most 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.

### **Muscling**

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 criterion 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.



MUSCLING

### Breed and Sex Characteristics

Breed and sex characteristics are more difficult to define. Often this is determined by looking at the head of the horse. The placement and shape of the eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth can make a horse look more feminine or more masculine. For American Quarter Horses, it is ideal to have a bright, tranquil eye with a soft, kind expression. A well-defined muzzle, refined chin and prominent jaw usually contribute to a horse with a “pretty head.” The ears should be proportional to the horse’s head and sit squarely on top of the head, pointing forward with an alert appearance. Again, these factors can be subjective. Whether a horse has a pretty head or not can be a matter of personal preference, and it normally doesn’t affect the horse’s performance.

### MOVEMENT

After a basic evaluation of conformation, the next step is evaluating a horse’s movement. Movement is an important criterion, 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. Horses will lope (or canter) on either the left or right lead. When traveling a circle to the left, the horse’s inside (left) legs should stretch out farther than their outside (right) legs and vice versa for the right side. The horse should stop easily when asked “whoa” by the rider and yield to leg aids. Ideally, horses should demonstrate the following:

- *Gaits (Walk, Trot and Lope (Canter) )*
- *The walk should 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 leads with little difficulty.*



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

**Western** – The horse should have a free-flowing stride of reasonable length in keeping with their 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 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 from the shoulder 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. (Nervousness/calmness; willingness/resistance; acceptance/rudeness; aggressiveness, etc.) While American Quarter Horses have been selectively bred 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, while 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 handled, both on the ground and under saddle. While the seller's opinions may be helpful, use your own eyes. Observe the horse being groomed, saddled and loaded in a trailer. 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? Pace or can't stand still, weave, chew?*
- *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.

Once you've seen the horse on the ground, it is time to get in the saddle. Always have the owner ride the horse first. This allows you to see how the horse responds when ridden. If you feel safe and comfortable with how the horse behaves for the owner, then ride the horse yourself.

Evaluate the horse's disposition during riding. Does the horse:

- *Walk, trot and lope/canter 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 their own?*

Keep in mind, the horse's disposition during riding may be 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. Have the professional ride and handle the horse as well as yourself. 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 is often derived strictly from intuition.

## PURCHASING A HORSE

### PRE-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 800-443-0177 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	Back and neck
Nose	Legs
Mouth and teeth	Ankles and hooves
Ears	Heart and lungs
Tail ( <i>for compliance with AQHA rules</i> )	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. Make sure to know requirements for your state or area as it may change from state to state.



### HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

Before you purchase a horse, you should be sure they have a negative Coggins certificate. A negative Coggins certificate is proof of a blood test done by a veterinarian to determine the presence or absence of Equine Infectious Anemia in the horse's blood. If contracted, EIA is usually fatal. Therefore, prevention is the best remedy. A negative Coggins certificate is normally required for the sale of a horse or to move a horse across state lines. This test should be done on all horses every 6-12 months, depending on your region. EIA is spread by the transfer of blood, so if a horse is infected they must be quarantined to prevent the spread to other horses via mosquitoes and horse flies.

Horses also should be up-to-date on their vaccinations, which usually include tetanus, encephalomyelitis, rabies, influenza and West Nile Virus, among others. Check with a veterinarian in your area to know what other vaccinations are usually required. You should also ask the current owner about the horse's deworming schedule.

### GUIDE OF UNDESIRABLE PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

Listed below are a few undesirable physical conditions that can affect horses. Be sure the veterinarian checks for these during the pre-purchase exam and that you ask the owner about them. Unfortunately, some owners won't always be honest with you about a horse's past physical problems, but it is still wise to ask. A veterinarian can determine if there is anything that currently affects the horse's health.

**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.

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**Condition:** Navicular disease

**Symptoms:** Affects front feet. Horse stands with 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.

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**Condition:** Parrot-mouth

**Symptoms:** Overshot or undershot of the upper jaw resulting in misalignment of upper and lower 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. The horse can show in performance events, but is not eligible for Halter.

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**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.

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**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. The horse can show in performance events, but is not eligible for Halter.

**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.

Effective with foals born on or after January 1, 2007, all descendants of Impressive are required to be parentage verified and HYPP tested. Any foal testing homozygous positive for HYPP (H/H) will not be eligible for registration with AQHA.

## PRICE

All things considered, your goal is to purchase the most gentle, seasoned horse you can afford with suitable conformation, disposition and movement. Keep in mind, however, that a trained and unsound horse is likely less valuable than an untrained 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 and consistent in their performance.

Also take into consideration pedigrees and past performance. Pedigrees and performance records may add value, but understand how 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** - Although young, unproven horses (1-4 years of age) are often more affordable, horses above the age of 10 may be more valuable due to seasoning or suitability for purpose.

## AQHAMEMBERS.ORG

AQHA members can view performance pedigree and numerous other records on American Quarter Horses at AQHAMEMBERS.ORG. Just another benefit of AQHA membership!



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 suggested ranges that you might expect to pay:

**Recreational, trained, 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**

## 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.



## CARING FOR YOUR HORSE

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 core 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. **To properly care for your horse, locate the following prior to purchase: local feed store, veterinarian, farrier and boarding facility.**

## UNWANTED HORSES

Horse owners are mindful of their responsibilities to breed, use and care for their horses, whether involved in racing, showing or recreation. Nonetheless, some in the horse industry are unaware that tens of thousands of horses end their days unwanted, unneeded or unusable. These are so-called “unwanted horses.”

Unwanted horses may be sick, injured or old. They may be unmanageable or dangerous. They may be horses an owner is no longer economically able to support. Whatever the reason, every owner – and the horse industry at large – has a responsibility to ensure everything possible is done so no horse becomes unwanted.

### Unwanted Horse Coalition

The Unwanted Horse Coalition represents a broad alliance of equine organizations that have joined together under the American Horse Council to educate the horse industry about the unwanted horse issue.

The mission of UHC is to reduce the number of unwanted horses and to improve their welfare through education and the efforts of organizations committed to the health, safety, and responsible care and disposition of these horses.

To learn more, visit [unwantedhorsecoalition.org](http://unwantedhorsecoalition.org).



## LIFE IS A RIDE

American Quarter Horses are the most versatile, safe, accessible and affordable equines around – traits that have made the breed the world’s most popular. In addition, the American Quarter Horse Association offers a variety of programs and services to provide you and your equine partner with a lifetime of fun and enjoyment.

### AQHA Shows

The Association sanctions more than 3,000 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).

### 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.

### Trail Ride Program

Saddle up on any horse and join us to celebrate the love of horseback riding as we navigate our way through hours of trails. More than 80 rides are held across the country and around the world each year.

## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

AQHA offers many educational resources to help you on your journey of horse ownership.

**Resources** – View and print AQHA informational and educational materials at [aqha.com/resources](http://aqha.com/resources).

**Educational DVDs** – Purchase educational DVDs from AQHA on various topics from horse health to training and showing. Order online at [aqha.com/store](http://aqha.com/store). AQHA members receive discounts on all DVDs.

**“AQHA’s Fundamentals of Horsemanship”** – This book and DVD series was developed in partnership with La Cense Montana. It’s a great starter course for new horse owners and an excellent resource for equestrians of all skill levels. Order online at [aqha.com](http://aqha.com). AQHA members receive a discount.

**Junior Master Horseman** – A youth educational program established by AQHA and the American Youth Horse Council that teaches kids about horses. JMH includes a book and interactive Web site, [juniormasterhorseman.com](http://juniormasterhorseman.com).

### Publications:

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

***The American Quarter Horse Racing Journal*** – monthly digital magazine featuring stories of people and horses in American Quarter Horse Racing.

To subscribe to either of the above publications, call 800-291-7323 or visit [aqha.com/magazines](http://aqha.com/magazines).

***America’s Horse*** – AQHA’s members-only magazine with celebrity interviews, industry news, photos and informational articles. It’s included with your AQHA membership!

All AQHA publications are available in digital format. Learn more at [aqha.com](http://aqha.com).



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