Owning a horse involves extensive research, lots of planning, regular veterinary care and a commitment from the entire family. If your family is serious about purchasing a horse, the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association recommends a thorough investigation of the horse’s health and condition by contacting an equine veterinarian to perform a pre-purchase examination.

As the purchaser, it is up to you to select a veterinarian, but both you and the seller should be present at the exam.

- **When selecting your equine veterinarian**, choose one you feel comfortable with and who is familiar with the breed.
- **Communicate your expectations** for the horse and ask your veterinarian to suggest procedures that would give you the best information about the animal.
- The veterinarian will perform a physical exam and observe the animal’s movements. Your veterinarian may incorporate various flexion tests, as well as radiographs of feet, joints and limbs.
- **When the exam is complete, your veterinarian will discuss the findings with you in private.** This is a great time to ask questions or request further information or procedures. The veterinarian will neither pass nor fail an animal, but will explain any existing medical problems or findings so that you may make an informed decision about the purchase.

**potential health risks**

As with any animal, horses are at risk for a variety of conditions, so it is important to work with your veterinarian on a prevention plan.

- **Few things will help protect your horse from infectious illnesses as effectively as vaccinations.** By immunizing your horse you will create a protective barrier between the horse and diseases such as tetanus, West Nile virus, rabies, equine influenza and others.
- **Your horse should also have blood drawn yearly to check for Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA), a potentially fatal disease of all equidae.**
- **Another potential danger you need be aware of is internal parasites.** These silent killers can cause extensive internal damage: lowering resistance to diseases; robbing the horse of valuable nutrients; causing stomach, intestinal irritation and; poor hair coat; and unthriftiness (failure to grow or gain weight). Using deworming agents on a regular basis in combination with good management procedures are critical to minimizing parasites.

**caring for your new horse**

Now that you are officially a horse owner, you will need to work with your veterinarian to keep your horse healthy for its full 25 to 30 years of life.

- **The most basic requirement your horse needs is shelter where it can take cover from the elements—rain, sleet, snow, wind or sun.** Ensure your horse’s stable has good ventilation, is dry and clean, and is well bedded.
- **Your veterinarian can set up a preventive medical program** — including management, physical examinations, blood tests, vaccinations, nutrition, ventilation and deworming — to fit your horse’s needs.
- **A yearly physical examination is important for evaluating your horse’s health and condition**, including examining teeth and scoring body condition to allow evaluation of nutrition and animal husbandry.
- **Provide your horse with ample fresh, clean water and good nutrition** consisting of grain and hay, which should be fed in an elevated feeder. A brown, trace-mineralized salt block should be available at all times.
- **Daily regimes should include** picking the horse’s feet out, brushing its body and making sure it gets proper exercise.