

Pet Peeves  
...about Buyers and Sellers  
by Bonnie Martin

Buying a horse should be an experience that involves research, education, and realistic expectations on the part of the buyer. Selling a horse should involve trying to match the buyer with a suitable mount. Unfortunately, both sides of the transaction often fall short of what they should be doing, and it is the horse that suffers.

It amazes me that so many first time horse buyers either don't ask a knowledgeable, honest horse person for advice, or that if they do, they totally ignore the advice and go off on their own to complete a transaction. Some of them luck into a reputable seller and get a horse suitable for their needs, some of them luck into a good horse without anyone caring about the match, but by far the majority of them end up with a horse they don't enjoy. Way too often, they end up with a horse that is either just too much horse for them, or worse, a horse that already has or soon develops habits that are actually dangerous to the new owners.

Owning a horse is a little more complicated than owning something like a car. Horses have their own minds and they might not always agree with what the owner thinks should be happening. They also are a lot easier to buy than to resell if you make a mistake in which one to get. What do you do then? Pawn it off on the next unsuspecting person who comes along and hope to recover your investment? Sell it at an auction? Give it away (to whom?)?

Some of the worst mistakes:

1. Buying a young horse for a child to "grow up with". If you care about your child, then DON'T do that! Young horses and children both have lots to learn before they are safe for each other.
2. Buying a horse just because it is a pretty color or you like its head, mane, the way it looks at you etc. There are a lot of other considerations that should come first..
3. Buying a horse just because of a low price. It might have health problems, conformation problems, training, or behavior problems. Check all that out if the deal seems too good.
4. Getting a horse because you feel sorry for it. Lots of horse rescues have horses available to adopt and some of them are fine, but others will make you sorry before long.

Sellers should feel a responsibility to both potential buyers and to the horse itself and not sell someone an animal that probably won't work for them. Unfortunately, it doesn't usually work that way. Sometimes it's a matter of honest miscommunication and not being on the same wavelength when discussing the horse. Other times, the seller is just

interested in getting rid of the horse and getting the money for it. If you are on the buying end, check out the seller's attitude about his/her horses, ask lots of questions, perhaps even ask for some references from other buyers. Get it right the first time and then enjoy your new partner.

...about Riders and Sellers

1. Riders who don't see the need to continue learning about horse psychology and horsemanship. They either think the horse should understand them or they put human emotions and feelings into their perception of the horse.
2. Riders who think pull back to stop and kick to go is all there is to it. Riding should be comfortable for the horse too. Good equitation helps both horse and rider.
3. Riders who resort to bigger bits and other gimmicks when they want quick results. Training (for the horse and the rider), not more muscle or leverage is what is needed.
4. Trainers who take short cuts to "fix" a problem or hurry the training along. Shame on them.
5. Riders who don't learn trail or arena courtesy and put others in danger. It's not that hard to find places to learn how to be safe and courteous.
6. Know-it alls-who lead others astray because they talk a good story even though they don't know whereof they speak.

If you have been around horses for any length of time, you've surely met some of these kinds of people and hopefully haven't fallen prey to any of them.