



# Equine Purchase Examinations

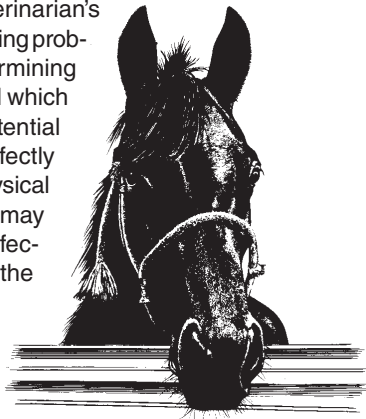
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Unlike other consumer products that one might purchase, horses rarely come with a guarantee. Therefore, the buyer must make the best possible attempt to select an animal that is suitable and capable of performing a given function, whether this is a family pet or a high level athlete. The buyer should handle the horse in the barn and under saddle. If you have a trainer, utilize their expertise in choosing the right horse for your needs.

Purchase examinations may vary, depending on the intended use of the horse and the veterinarian who is doing the examination. Deciding exactly what should be included in the purchase examination requires good communication between you and your veterinarian. The following guidelines from the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) will help ensure a custom-tailored exam:

- Choose a veterinarian who is familiar with the breed, sport or use for which the horse is being purchased. Explain to your veterinarian your expectations and primary uses for the horse, including short and long-term goals (e.g., showing, then breeding).
- Ask your veterinarian to outline the procedures that he or she feels should be included in the exam and why.
- Establish the costs for these procedures.
- Be present during the purchase exam. The seller or agent should also be present.
- Discuss with your veterinarian his or her findings in private.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions or request further information about your veterinarian's findings in private.

The goal of the purchase exam is to provide the buyer with enough information to make an informed decision on whether the horse will meet their needs. The purchase exam assesses the general health, conformation and soundness for intended use. It is the veterinarian's responsibility to note any pre-existing problems and assist the buyer in determining which ones can be managed and which will limit present use or have potential to cause future problems. Perfectly sound animals—those with no physical faults—are rarely found. A horse may have minor alterations from “perfection” and still be able to perform the given task.



Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheets  
 are also available on our website at:  
<http://osufacts.okstate.edu>

## In preparation for the purchase exam:

### Ask yourself:

- What do I want to use the horse for?
- How long do I expect to own the horse?
- What is my budget for the pre purchase exam and what additional diagnostics am I willing or able to pay for?
- Have my trainer or I noticed any red flags to bring to the attention of the veterinarian?
- If you are looking to purchase a potential breeding animal you will want your veterinarian to conduct procedures that determine reproductive health.

### Request:

- Ask the owner to provide a health history, including vaccination, deworming and farrier records. Often the Veterinarian performing the examination will provide a questionnaire for the seller to complete.
- Ask the owner--some owners may be willing to provide previous radiographs or ultrasound examination results
- Talk to your veterinarian about what is included in the basic exam and any suggested additional testing.

### The Purchase Exam may include:

- Basic Health Exam
  - History of health problems
  - History of preventive care-vaccinations and deworming
  - Temperature, pulse, respiration
  - Body condition score
  - Conformation evaluation
  - Examination of eyes, mouth, teeth, ears
- Soundness assessment
  - Performance evaluation on the flat, round pen or lunge line and possibly under saddle
  - Palpation of limbs and flexion tests
  - Use of hoof testers
  - Condition of feet and shoeing
- Ancillary diagnostics (consult with your veterinarian regarding which procedures are recommended and why)
  - Blood work-Coggins testing, wellness profile, drug testing if indicated and testing for genetic conditions as appropriate
  - Fecal examination for internal parasites
  - Ultrasound examination of tendons and ligaments
  - Radiographs of joints
  - Advanced imaging-MRI and CT

- o Endoscopy of the airway and stomach
- o Breeding soundness exam for potential breeding animals

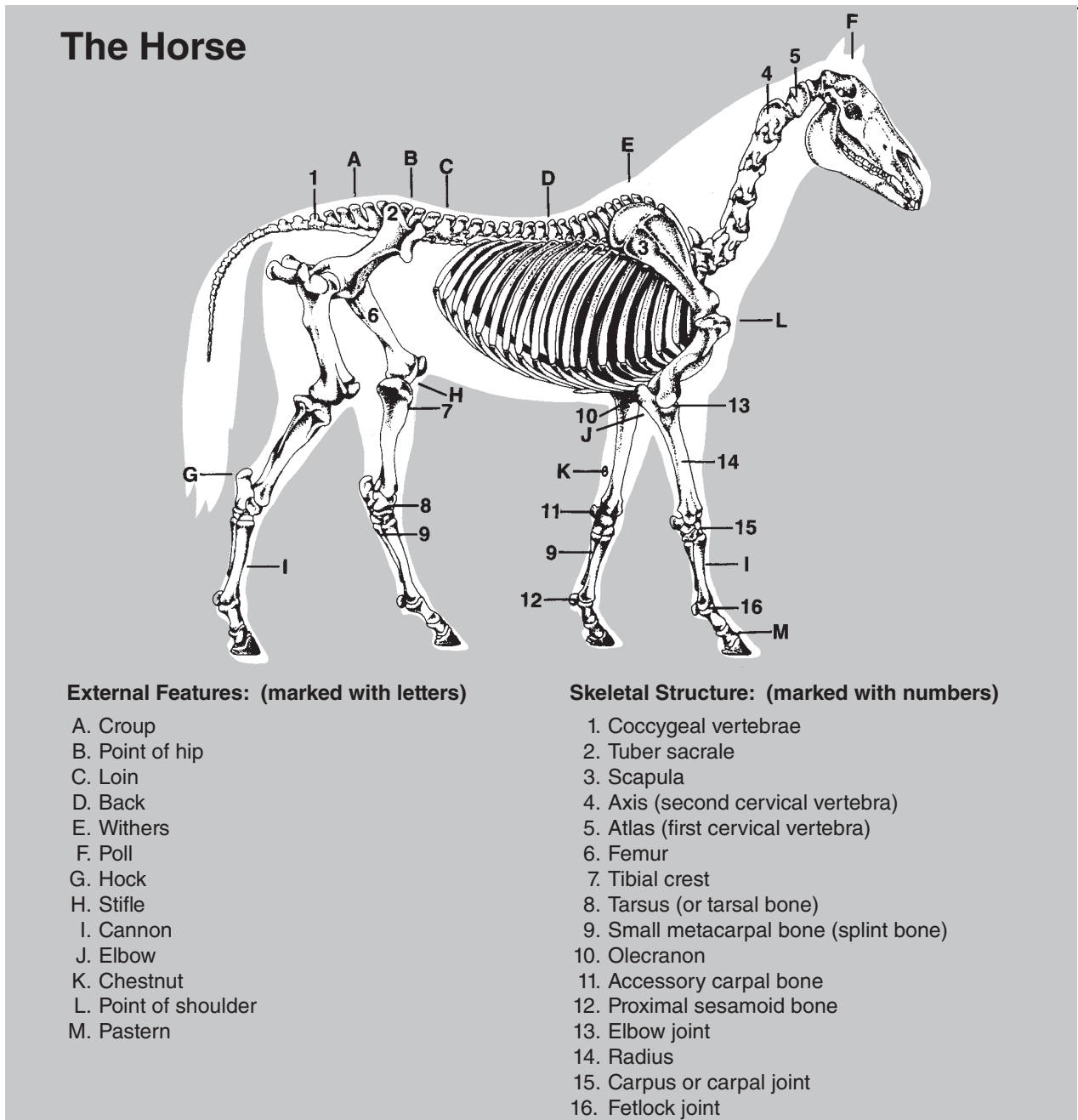
Preparing yourself in advance, helps you know what to expect from the experience. The purpose of the purchase examination is not to pass or fail the horse, but to inform the buyer of existing or potential problems that could render the horse unsuitable for its intended use. Open communication

with the seller and your veterinarian ensures that everyone is on the same page. The pre purchase exam is one tool that can assist you in your buying decision.

**For more information:**

Please contact your veterinarian and take advantage of information for horse owners at:

The American Association of Equine Practitioners [www.aaep.org](http://www.aaep.org), search publication archives under Owners, Horse Health.



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