



“VETTING” ADVICE SHEET

The aim of a ‘vetting’”, or more correctly a Pre-Purchase Examination, is to carry out a very thorough and complete veterinary examination of the chosen horse which you, the purchaser, has decided will be suitable for your needs.

Our job is to assess the horse and look for any abnormalities in order to express an opinion as to whether the horse is likely to be suitable for its intended use, and to allow you to make an informed decision as to whether to go ahead with your chosen purchase.

Any abnormalities found on the examination will always be assessed in relation to the intended use of the horse. Horses do not simply just pass or fail a vetting. An old settled tendon injury for example, may be an acceptable risk for someone buying a first lead rein pony, but would be an unacceptable risk if it were found on a horse intended for Eventing or Show-Jumping.

Requirements for a vetting to be carried out

- ◆ A clean horse, preferably without hoof oil on its hooves!
- ◆ The horse should be kept in for at least two hours prior to the vetting.
- ◆ Someone who is able to handle, trot up, lunge and ride the horse.
- ◆ If shod, the horse’s shoes should be in good order. We cannot vet a horse if its shoes are loose or have fallen off!
- ◆ A dark stable to examine the eyes
- ◆ An area of hard level ground where the horse can be walked and trotted up in hand.
- ◆ An area where the horse could be lunged or trotted in a circle, on hard ground (not concrete).
- ◆ An area where the horse can be ridden safely at all paces.
- ◆ The horse’s passport should be available.

The Five Stages of the Examination

Stage 1: The Preliminary Examination:

This involves a methodical and extensive examination of the whole horse, including eyes, skin, heart, lungs and feet. Conformation and general appearance is assessed. The limbs and joints are assessed for heat, swellings or lesions. The feet are also assessed for foot balance, conformation and any abnormalities.

Stage 2: Trotting Up:

The horse is walked and trotted up in a straight line. The horse is turned in a small circle to the left and right, and backed up a few paces. Hind limb and forelimb flexion tests are performed. This is done by holding the limb in a flexed position and then watching the horse trot off to see if there is any lameness when the joints are put under stress. The horse is also lunged, at trot, on hard ground for further lameness assessment.



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Stage 3: Strenuous Exercise:

The horse is observed when it is tacked up, mounted and dismounted. The heart's response to exertion is assessed. Any abnormal inspiratory noises are detected, and any lameness under exercise is noted.

Stage 4: Period of Rest:

This is a period which allows the horse to recover from exercise, and any potential stiffness after exercising can become apparent. During this time we will normally complete the horse identification, check for a microchip and take a blood sample. A blood sample is taken and stored for up to six months for the purchaser. During this time the sample can be tested for the presence of certain drugs (e.g. equipalazone (bute)) if necessary.

Stage 5: Second Trot Up:

The horse is trotted up in hand to see if there is any stiffness or lameness after exercise. Flexion tests may be repeated and the horse may be turned and backed as in Stage Two.

After completing the five stages we may decide that further investigations are necessary, such as x-rays or endoscopy, before we can give an opinion. However in the majority of cases we will discuss our findings with you, the purchaser, at the end of the examination. If the horse is decided to be suitable we will then complete a Pre-Purchase Examination Certificate, noting all our findings.

Five Stage Vetting or Two Stage Vetting?

The full Five Stage Examination gives as complete a picture as possible and is therefore our preferred option. In certain circumstances we will however perform a limited Pre-Purchase Examination (Stages One and Two only), if for example the animal is unbroken or heavily in foal.

When requesting a Two Stage Examination it is important that you are aware that certain respiratory, heart and lameness abnormalities may not be revealed.