The Pre-Purchase Examination in the Sport Horse

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There are Many Considerations when Selecting a Horse for Purchase

- Health and soundness
  - Soundness manageability
- Ability
- Budget
- Experience of Horse
- Show Record
- Breeding
- Gender
- Color/Appearance
- Size
- More?
A Few Interesting Thoughts

- The term “vetting” originated as a synonym for the equine pre-purchase exam but now is also used in politics
- The pre-purchase exam is always better than the post-purchase lameness exam
- Worth the cost?
  - “Buying a horse is almost always the least expensive thing you will do with it” – Kathy Backus
Pre-Purchase Exam

Purpose

- To buy or not to buy
- Identify pre-existing conditions
  - Pre-lease
  - Determine baseline
  - Determine manageability
- Determine value
  - Now
  - For resale
Choosing a Veterinarian

- Your regular Vet
  - Familiarity
  - Knows expectations
- Familiarity with breed/discipline
- Needs access to necessary equipment
  - Digital x-rays
  - Endoscope
  - Ultrasound
Choosing a Veterinarian

- Search internet, AAEP, ask vet for a reference
- Seller’s Veterinarian
  - Disadvantage
    - Conflict of Interest?
  - Advantage
    - Knows the horse
    - Has records
  - Disclosure/consent from buyer and seller
  - Disclosure of record
Choosing a Location

- **Veterinary Clinic**
  - Good longing surfaces?
  - Necessary for special procedures
- **Stable**
  - Relaxed environment
- **Show Grounds**
- **Back Yard**
  - may lack proper facilities
What Tests Do I Have Done?

- **Clinical Examination**
  - Very important
  - Sometimes skipped when horse is very familiar
  - Major organ systems
    - Eyes
    - Heart
    - Lungs
    - Skin
    - Teeth
    - Neurologic
What Tests Do I Have Done?

- Clinical Examination
  - Neck, back, limbs and feet
    - Conformation
    - Hoof testers
    - Palpation
      - Enlargement
      - Fluid
      - Heat
      - Pain
      - Swelling
  - Passive flexion
    - Range of motion
    - Pain
What Tests Do I Have Done?

- Clinical Examination
  - In hand
  - Flexion Tests
  - Longing
    - Hard ground
    - In footing
  - Under saddle/in harness
What Tests Do I Have Done?

- **X-rays**
  - Most common ancillary test in the PPE
    - Easy to obtain and share
    - Good information about bones and joints
    - Not good for soft tissue injuries
  - Routine screening and/or based on clinical exam findings
What Tests Do I Have Done?

- **X-rays (continued)**
  - Routine x-rays dependent on:
    - Budget – often take 40+ x-rays costing $2000
    - Discipline
    - Age
      - Older – wear and tear
      - Younger – OCD
    - Past history
      - Past career – racing?
      - Past medical history
    - Resale prospect?
What Tests Do I Have Done?

- **Ultrasound**
  - Good for soft tissues except in the foot
  - Can be difficult to evaluate high suspensory injury
  - Most often to evaluate questionable areas on clinical or for known past injuries

- **MRI**
  - Expensive for limited area
  - Most commonly for feet
  - Can be done standing
    - Poor image quality
  - For high quality or above feet requires general anesthesia
What Tests Do I Have Done?

- **Fluoroscopy**
  - Real time “moving” x-rays
  - Poor quality compared to digital x-rays
  - No longer frequently used

- **Nuclear Scintigraphy**
  - “Bone scan”
  - Relatively expensive
  - Can do entire body or a portion (neck, back, pelvis, limbs)
  - May be of limited value in a sound horse
What Tests Do I Have Done?

- **Endoscopy**
  - **Airway**
    - Routine?
    - Only if making breathing noise on exercise?
    - At rest vs dynamic
  - **Gastric**
    - Stomach Ulcers
- **Reproductive Exam**
  - Mare
  - Stallion
What Tests Do I Have Done?

- Blood tests
  - Health Profile
    - Underlying disease?
    - Muscle problems
  - Coggins Test
  - Drug screen
    - Will need more expensive test to confirm a suspected drug
    - Pain and mood altering most important
    - Makes little sense to store blood
  - Genetic tests
    - Breed specific
    - HYPP, HERDA, PSSM, others
Review of Medical History

- Release of medical records now required in California
- Records may not be complete
  - Use of multiple vets
  - Frequent ownership changes
  - Omissions on purpose
- Records may not be available or released by seller
- A history of “joint maintenance” may be good
- Release is required if I am to vet a current or past patient
Reporting the Findings

- Findings should be reported
  - Written report
  - Verbal report
  - To owner and/or trainer
- Include copies of all test results and images/x-rays
- No “Pass or Fail” given
  - Different people have different risk levels and experiences
  - PPE is only one factor in purchase decision
  - Some relevance should be given to the reported findings
Questions?

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