



# PRE-PURCHASE EXAM

Information leaflet No: 4 (May 2019)

## Why have a pre-purchase examination (vetting)?

We all know buying a horse is a big and often expensive decision. A Pre-Purchase examination (PPE) or "Vetting" can help identify any current health problems (such as lameness) and we advise that a PPE be performed on all horses prior to purchase.

## What does a pre-purchase exam involve?

The aim of the pre-purchase examination is to conduct a thorough clinical examination on behalf of a potential purchaser to identify any factors that could prejudice the horse's suitability for its intended use.

The standard pre-purchase examination includes 5 stages, though a "limited" or 2-stage examination can also be performed if requested. If a 2 stage examination is requested, a signed form declining stages 3, 4 and 5 is needed before the examination is conducted.

**Stage 1- Preliminary Examination:** A full clinical examination of the horse including, body condition, heart (at rest), lungs, skin and conformation. Identification of the horse.

**Stage2- Walk and trot in hand:** Assessing the horse at walk and trot in a straight line, backing up of the horse, circling and where appropriate flexion tests and lunging. Flexion tests and trotting in a circle on a firm surface are not mandatory parts of the standard procedure, but they can sometimes provide useful additional information about the horse. There may be circumstances when the examining veterinary surgeon concludes that it is unsafe or inappropriate to perform such tests and they may be omitted from the examination.

**Stage 3-Exercise phase:** The exercise needs to be strenuous so ridden work is preferable, though in certain circumstances lunge work may be acceptable. This phase also includes assessment of the horse being saddled and mounted, ridden at walk, trot and canter (and galloping as necessary), assessment of wind and abnormal respiratory sounds, plus auscultation of the heart & lungs immediately after strenuous exercise.

**Stage4-Period of rest and re-examination:** Assessing cardiovascular system and lungs following a period of rest.

**Stage5- Second trot up:** Repeat walk and trot in a straight line and flexion tests. This is to determine if any lameness has become apparent following the ridden work.

## Can I have additional tests on the horse?

We advise taking a blood sample which can identify certain substances that may have been given to the horse at the time of the vetting. It can be analysed immediately or stored for up to for 6 months. Where appropriate, additional tests can be requested or may be recommended by the veterinary surgeon, such as x-rays or endoscopy. Please note there will be additional costs associated with further tests. Unless requested by the purchaser and specified in additional procedures, a PPE does not include examination of the inside of the prepuce (sheath), a detailed mouth examination with a speculum, a height measurement or any examination for pregnancy.

## After a vetting will I get a certificate?

The vet will write you a certificate detailing any relevant findings and/or history. Where possible and if required, we advise that you obtain suitable insurance cover before purchasing the horse. Insurers often require a copy of the PPE certificate before insuring the horse and please note that exclusions may be applied on the basis of the certificate.

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## Prior to the vetting:

1. A discussion is held between the purchaser and the veterinary surgeon to ascertain the requirements of the vetting and particular concerns the purchaser may have with the horse.
2. If only a 2 stage vetting is requested, a signed form declining stages 3, 4 and 5 is needed before the vetting is performed. This can be emailed or faxed to the purchaser.
3. The horse should be trimmed or shod within the last 28 days of the vetting, though ideally not within the previous week.
4. All documentation should be available at the start of the examination, i.e. passport.
5. On presentation, the horse should be well groomed and have been stabled for a minimum of 90 minutes before start of the exam.
6. Suitable premises must be available to perform the vetting, including: a dark stable to perform an eye examination, a flat, hard surface for trotting up (a busy road is not suitable) and a suitable handler to trot the horse, an indoor/outdoor school or similar for the ridden exam, plus a suitable rider. Please note, if conditions are not suitable the vet may choose to postpone or move the examination. If necessary, the examination can be performed at the hospital where surfaces/buildings/equipment are prepared specifically for the procedure.



## Things to note:

**Identification and legal ownership:** The certificate serves to identify the horse that was examined, but it is not the responsibility of the veterinary surgeon to ascertain that the declared seller has legal title of the horse. It is the responsibility of the purchaser to satisfy themselves as to the ownership of the horse and to verify the records of any microchip with the relevant database. A horse cannot be sold without a passport and the vet will request to see the passport during the PPE.

**Age:** Without appropriate paper records from foalhood it is not possible to confirm the age of a horse with accuracy. Estimates of age based on a dental examination are imprecise and unreliable. Any age range shown on the certificate is approximate and based on opinion only. In the absence of documentary evidence, the term 'aged' may be used to refer to a horse considered after examination to be over 15 years of age.

**Limitations of the examination:** If any parts of the five stage vetting were omitted for any reason, the opinion given is based purely upon those parts of the examination that were completed. The incomplete examination will not have identified any clinical signs of disease, injury or abnormality that could only have been revealed as part of the standard procedure that was omitted. The horse examined may, at the time of the examination, have been subject to some previously administered drug or medication having the effect of masking or concealing some disease, injury or physical abnormality that might otherwise have been clinically discoverable.

**The horses' clinical history:** Due to potential conflicts of interest, we will usually refuse to perform PPEs for horses belonging to clients registered with our practice. If the examining veterinary surgeon is aware of any prior veterinary involvement with the horse, the examination may only be carried out with permission from the owner for full disclosure of all known clinical history. If the clinical history represents a greater than normal risk of the horse developing future problems (i.e. recurrence or delayed consequences of a prior condition), this should be indicated on the certificate along with an explanatory note. (The horse may nevertheless be suitable for purchase based on a risk/benefit analysis). It should be noted that the horse may have received veterinary treatment beyond the awareness of the examining veterinary surgeon.

**Sellers warranty:** The opinion provides no assurances in response of matters that can only be established by the seller's representation to the purchaser. A seller's warranty is a matter between the seller and the purchaser and is not the responsibility of the examining veterinary surgeon. The purchaser should consider obtaining a written warranty from the seller covering, for example, matters such as medical or surgical history, height, freedom from vices, temperament, non-administration of drugs prior to the examination and the horse's previous or existing uses and performance levels.

**The Opinion:** The opinion expressed in the certificate is subject to the limitations of the examination (see above) and provides no assurance in respect of those matters that can only be established by a seller's representations to a purchaser

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL THE EQUINE PRACTICE, OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE**

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