

After helping us to put together a budget for horse ownership in the last issue of HW, this month HW's Pony Princess Michelle O'Neill takes us through the pros and cons of buying a 'rescue' horse. And if you've ever dreamt of working in the horse industry, Michelle also has some great advice for achieving your equestrian ambitions.

'It's important to remember that just like bigger horses, the faster a pony trots, the harder it is to get them to canter.'

rescue or buy first pony

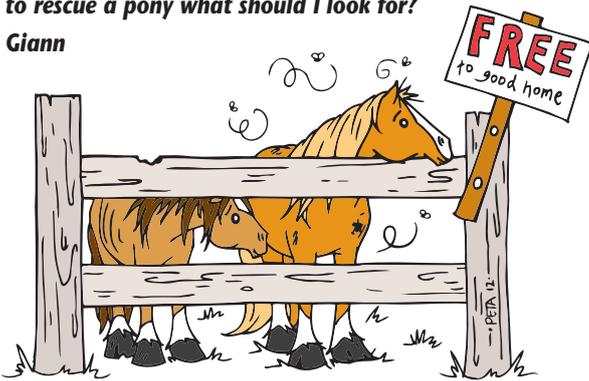
Dear Michelle,

My name is Giann and my parents have recently said I could get a horse! :) I have looked around and I have decided I really want to rescue one. My parents are not horsey at all, but they've said they will give me the support I need.

My riding instructor, who lives down the road, said that she would be happy to help me if I rescued a horse and would come over once a week to help me re-train and care for it. But this will be my first horse, even though I have been riding for around six years and I have a few older, experienced horsey friends.

Should I rescue or buy my first horse? And if I'm going to rescue a pony what should I look for?

Giann



Congratulations Giann, on being ready to enter the world of horse ownership! You have obviously planned everything very well and having the support of your parents and your instructor will be very helpful for you.

Certainly, the idea of rescuing a horse is one we all dream of. It is a great achievement to take a horse that has had a hard time and work towards giving it a better life. BUT... taking on a rescue horse it is not a decision to be entered into lightly. While every individual horse's situation will be different, often horses that need to be rescued can carry both the physical and mental scars of their past life. Depending on how they have been treated, and what their physical condition is like, they may need a lot of re-training and knowledgeable care to overcome past experiences.

Rescue horses can also APPEAR to be a much cheaper option than a 'normal' horse, as they usually don't cost very much to purchase. But its worth considering that sometimes the 'ongoing' time and training these horses will require, can mean they end up costing you a whole lot more in the long run. You might also have to face the reality down the track, that your rescue horse may not be the right kind of riding horse for you; whether because it has too many behavioural or

training issues for you to deal with or it simply does not have the ability to be trained in the things you want to do.

Once you've considered all these things and talked it through with your parents and friends, it may be a better idea to buy or lease an experienced, 'first' horse for you to learn with this time around. Later on, you can then consider buying a rescue horse, once you have first gained the necessary experience and knowledge in caring for your own horse.

Good luck Giann and I'm sure you'll find your dream horse!

from trot to canter

Dear Michelle,

I have an 11hh Icelandic x Shetland pony. He's very cute and just loves trotting! He can be stubborn when I ask him to canter and I usually have to work hard to get a fast trot going before I can ask him to canter at all. He has a very big personality, and sometimes I can just feel that he doesn't want to canter, so I don't even attempt it. But it's starting to annoy me and I think that this lets him know he only has to canter when he feels like it.

I'm very proud of him, because before I starting training him, he wouldn't even walk for you; he'd just dig in his heels and not budge. So it took a lot of work (and falls) getting him to the stage he is at now! But, do you have any tips or tricks that I can do to get his upward transition from trot to canter going a bit more smoothly?

Darcie

Hi Darcie,

It really sounds like you have done a great job with your pony! You are right to be proud of him and you should be proud of yourself too!

I have seen a few ponies like yours who just love to trot; they just go faster and faster, but simply stay in the trot. But it's important to remember that just like bigger horses,



Photo by Andrew Hennell

the faster a pony trots, the harder it is to get them to canter. So, you need to slow your pony's trot down before you ask for a canter and - if he feels like he is trotting like a harness horse - you will know he is trotting too fast!

I would first try to work with your pony on the ground to get the canter established. By putting him on the lunge or in a round yard, you can teach him using your voice and body language to go into canter smoothly and calmly. Be sure to tell him to "canter" each time you ask him to.

Once you have him cantering on the lunge you could also use a small cavalletti (jump) to help you. Trot your pony up to the cavalletti and then as you go over it, urge him into canter. If you use the techniques you have taught him during your ground work (using your voice command especially) he should pop into the canter easily as he finishes the jump.

As you build your skills, you will be able to ask any horse you ride to canter every time you ask. Unless a horse is in pain or injured (and that's always worth checking with your vet about if you think there may be a problem), a healthy horse should be able to canter whenever we ask them to. But as I said earlier, I have known plenty of little ponies like yours that just don't like to canter until they become more balanced and learn how much fun cantering can be!

Good luck Darcie!

horsecareers

Dear Michelle,

When I'm older, I want to follow a career in horses. But I need to know what is required academically. Is Year 12 required for most jobs and what is the average wage? Could you please send me some helpful links. Thank you so much for your time.

Tayla

Hello Tayla

If you want to work in the horse industry, the sky really is your limit! There are so many jobs out there - from stable hands and track work riders to veterinary assistants, from horse trainers to administration assistants and company managers. The other great thing about our industry is that you don't have to

actually work with horses to be part of it - or you can hang around horses all day long if that's what you want to do! There are also many people out there, who are absolutely essential to the horse industry (in areas such as sports medicine, nutrition and event management), who don't ever have to swing a leg over a horse.

Essentially, what you will require academically will depend on what you want to do. It is great to finish Year 12 at school, as this will help you to not only get a job when you leave, but will help you if you want to do more training later on. In NSW (check your particular state TAFE sites for details) you can start studying in the horse industry whilst you are still at school, through the TVET program. The best place to find this sort of information would be through your careers adviser at school.

It's also really important to get as many practical skills as you can too. Spending time with people in the horse industry, attending clinics or going to great horse events like EQUITANA (www.equitana.com.au) are all great ways to watch horse industry demonstrations and learn new skills. Oh, and reading HorseWyse Magazine always helps of course!

Wages in the horse industry are determined by the level of your qualifications and the level of experience you have; so the more you have of both of these things, the more you should hopefully get paid!

Good luck and never stop learning!

(We know many of our HW readers are keen to find out about the different study courses and work opportunities now available around the world with horses, so stay tuned for more education tips and horse industry education features in future issues of HorseWyse Magazine! Ed)



With so many options available in the equestrian industry today, you don't have to be an elite level rider to find a rewarding and challenging career with horses.
Photo left by Millie Drury; photo right by www.123rf.com



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