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### **Purchase Exams—Why All the Questions?**

You have been searching for weeks, going from one farm to the next looking for your new horse, or perhaps your first horse. You think you've found him. It's Monday morning and you call the office to schedule your pre-purchase exam, and WHAM!—you're being asked question after question. Who is the owner? What is the horse's vaccine history? Can you get a copy of his/her medical history? "Why does it matter?" you ask—you're hiring us to do the exam.

Well, horses usually do not come with money-back guarantees. That's why it's important to know what you're buying and from whom. A purchase exam provides information about an individual horse on a given day at a particular moment. Think of the exam as a still photograph. The more information we have on the horse going into the exam, the better we may be able to predict his future health and soundness.

The owner information is very important. It will let us know if there is a conflict of interest and may help avoid an uncomfortable situation. Perhaps we have dealt with that particular seller before. Maybe the dealings were pleasant and the seller was forthright, or perhaps the opposite. It doesn't happen often, but there have been times when a seller was not happy to hear that their horse is unsound and will chase us off the property, asking us to never come back! If that's the case, we may refer you to another veterinary practice, if you want to continue the purchasing process. This information will also enable us to contact the owner should we need to sedate the horse to take radiographs or simply to ask the owner a question.

Vaccine history is also important. It may give you an indication of how the horse has been cared for in the past. Should you purchase the horse, it will also let us know if he/she will need any booster vaccines and when they should be given.

Medical history can be a request that some people do not feel comfortable making. "Why should the owner release the history to me?" you ask. It never hurts to ask. No doubt the owner has shared the horse's performance history with you and may have told you, "He's never been sick a day in his life," or "He's never taken a lame step." If so, they should have no problem supplying you with this very important information. If they don't provide this information, it doesn't necessarily mean that they're hiding something; however, if they say, "Sure, no problem," then you'll have the information if it's needed later. The medical history is also helpful to us, so that we can see if there have been any recurring problems or any past problems that could signal future unsoundness. It should also include the vaccination dates and the date blood was last drawn for a Coggins test. Making sure the horse has a current negative Coggins test is a must prior to moving him to a new facility.

In addition to the exam itself, we usually recommend drawing blood for a Complete Blood Count (CBC), Metabolic Profile, fecal examination, drug screen. Digital radiographs and other diagnostics may be indicated dependent upon the intended use of the horse, the desires of the purchaser and areas of concern.

Remember—when buying a horse for a family pet, a pleasure mount, a breeding animal, or a high performance athlete, try to get as much information as you can prior to your pre-purchase exam, and let our doctor review the information ahead of time. This information could ultimately save you time, money, and the disappointment of purchasing an unsuitable horse. It may also be the start of a very rewarding relationship with your new horse.