

Florida veterinarian shares the whats, hows and whys of key step in most equine transactions.

Palm Beach Equine Clinic's Dr. Richard Wheeler recently shared the basic steps he takes in performing an equine pre-purchase exam. Dr. Wheeler and PBEC's 28 veterinarians, including Board Certified surgeons, internal medicine specialists, and radiologists, are considered some of the most experienced in the disciplines of show jumping, dressage, and polo. All of the doctors enjoy the opportunity to work with many of the top horses in the world in all disciplines featured in PBEC's home base of Wellington, FL.



No matter what the breed or discipline, pre-purchase exams include several basic initial steps. First, an overall health evaluation of the horse is completed, including previous health history, general condition, and conformation, as well as specific examination of the body systems including eyes, cardiovascular system and respiratory system.

Next, a lameness assessment is completed, including flexion tests, soft tissue structure palpation, and movement evaluation. Additional diagnostic imaging such as radiographs (x-rays), ultrasound, endoscopy, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), or nuclear scintigraphy (bone scans) may be requested for additional information.

The purpose for the veterinarian to perform an examination of the horse is to assess its current state of health and soundness at the time of the examination, as well as gather information that may help to predict a level of risk for the future use of the horse. Dr. Wheeler explained the steps that he takes when evaluating a horse for sale, as follows:

“The first thing I do is talk to the potential buyer and trainer to gather their expectations and any

March 2016 - Examining the Pre-Purchase Exam

Written by CRM

Tuesday, 01 March 2016 01:31

concerns that have arisen during the trial of the horse. Next I discuss the horse with the current owner and/or trainer to determine what level of training or competition it is in, and if it has any previous issues that they are dealing with.

“Then we look at the horse in a static exam in the stall. We do a physical exam, looking at the whole body from front to back. Key points are the eyes, heart, and lungs and we palpate from the head and neck, to the back, and down the limbs. We are looking for signs of old injuries or areas that may have issues; conformation comes into play here as well.”

“We want to look at the horse in a dynamic exam. We usually look at it on the lead line and on a lunge line, or trotting in a circle on hard and soft surfaces, and then also under saddle as well. I like to see all of my horses go under saddle because we can observe the interaction of horse and rider, which is very important. During this stage we will perform flexion tests and ask the horse to perform specific movements depending on the discipline.”

“Blood tests are often taken and normally will include CBC, Chemistry, Coggins test and a drug screen. Depending of the age or type of horse other tests may be performed.”



Not A Pass/Fail Situation

“Finally, there are some auxiliary tests, which may include radiographs, ultrasound exams, and endoscopy of the upper airways. These days, if there are certain issues, we will also include further diagnostic tests such as MRIs or bone scans. That depends on what is found in other parts of the exam. If there is something suspicious on a radiograph, the buyer might want to do more advanced imaging. Or sometimes, depending on the value of the horse, they might want to do that anyway.”

Dr. Wheeler pointed out that it is not the intention of a pre-purchase exam to recommend the horse for purchase or for sale. The exam is performed to provide information about the level of risk and educate the client of that risk.

The client will make the decision on whether they want to buy the horse or not based on the information the veterinarian has provided as well as information from their trainer.

“What might be acceptable for you may not be for me, or vice versa, depending on what I want the horse for or the value of the horse,” Dr. Wheeler noted. “It is not a pass/fail situation. We are just describing the horse, doing our best to state whether the issues that it has can be maintained or can be useful for the horse’s given profession, and what is expected of it, and this is where experience is so important. If the horse is being purchased as a low level children’s show horse, the stresses on it are going to be less than if it is being asked to go to the Olympics.”

Every exam is different, but the basic steps of evaluating a horse for any discipline or level of competition are fairly standard. It is important to have a veterinarian who is experienced and knowledgeable with the specific discipline to provide accurate guidance on the horse’s condition for the expected job. For the clientele of Palm Beach Equine Clinic, the veterinarians are all well schooled in the different disciplines, and many have additional expertise in specific areas.

The world-renowned veterinarians of PBEC will be sharing their expertise on equine pre-purchase exams in a four-part series featured exclusively on ProEquest through April 2016. Located in the heart of Wellington, FL, PBEC serves multi-discipline clientele at equestrian competitions throughout North America and abroad.

March 2016 - Examining the Pre-Purchase Exam

Written by CRM

Tuesday, 01 March 2016 01:31

Article provided by Palm Beach Equine Clinic. For more information, visit www.equineclinic.com