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FACT SHEET

Department of Animal Science, University of Connecticut

Effective Horse Management - Second in the Horse Selection Series

Phrases to be wary of when reading horse classifieds!

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We wanted to give you, the first time prospective horse buyer, some insight into what you may read in an equine classified. Now keep in mind it might mean just what it says, however let us give you some alternate definitions for some key phrases.

These were taken from an actual classified magazine. We have broken them into categories that include discipline, training, horse's condition, and owner's preference.

Classified Ads Pertaining to Discipline

"Broke for western pleasure" – can mean just that, but also can mean that it needs a great amount of leg and will not jump anything. It could be perfect for you, if you want to go western, but if you are looking for a more all-around horse you may want to avoid this one.

"**Barrel or penning prospect" -** most likely NOT for beginner riders! Usually this can mean that these horses are a bit "high spirited" or maybe even a little nutty. Horses that like to run, generally like to run almost everywhere and the word "prospect" in this line can mean that they are green too!

"Great for lessons and trails" – Means just that – this also means most of the time that it will not be such a good show prospect. Maybe this horse does not trailer well? Maybe it gets stressed at shows. Ask questions if a show horse is what you are after – if you want a trail horse this sounds like one to look into.

Classified Ads Pertaining to Training Level

“Unlimited potential” – can mean that the horse has good athletic ability but is difficult to train, or can be that it is very young and although it moves nicely no one has tried to break it yet. This one is most likely not for a beginner, or novice horse owner.

“Tried a little of everything” – This means that they have tried different disciplines but maybe the horse has not shown an aptitude for any one area. This sounds like one that would need more training – figure that into your budget.

“**No beginners” or “Experienced rider needed”** – this is something to pay attention too – they would not say this if they did not mean this! These horses will need the experience of a person who knows how to handle themselves. Ask if they buck or rear; ask “why did you say that in your ad?” If you are a novice rider or owner – maybe look further.

“Needs retraining – 10 yrs old – QH gelding” – This sounds scary to me! Retraining is really difficult, and you would want to know why this horse is in this mental condition. The price would be low – but retraining could take many months and training fees mount up rapidly.

“Professionally trained reasonably priced” – depending on what you’re looking for this could be good. Sometimes this can mean that the horse will be competitive for local shows but will not really be competitive at the “breed show” level. If you wanted to just show locally and have a well trained animal you should give this owner a call.

“Green but learning” – This can mean that the horse will take a rider, but is nowhere near finished at the canter. Find out where in the process this horse is and expect to pay to have it finished.

“Untapped athletic ability - fun and lively personality – needs experienced, confident, kind rider” – This one is descriptive, but yet vague at the same time. I would guess that this one can be a handful. Maybe this one will be good some day but novices should beware. What is “lively” is that spooky, jumpy, full of bucks – what? The confident, kind rider part shows insight into the current owner. This owner sees themselves as kind and confident. He/She wants their horse to be treated fairly, so ask what situation could arise where a new owner might not treat his/her horse kindly.

“Ready for finishing” – means green.

Classified Ads Pertaining to Horse’s Physical/Mental Condition

“Needs consistency” – Many times this means that a horse has lots of energy and needs to be worked at least every other day. This takes a large time commitment. Ask questions of this owner to find out just what they meant. Know that you have that kind of time to invest.

“Loves to run” – see above… - but also can mean hard to stop. Ask questions about how difficult the horse is to transition down. Ask about both gymkhana and show ring experiences. Also ask if it is “off the track” which means it was bred and trained to run.

“Forward mover” – can mean good for English also can mean really hard to stop. Ask how strong the horse is. Ask its level of training and if it is right for your level of riding or ownership.

“Good Companion Horse” – This one can mean many things! It can mean the horse is really old, but is good natured and wants to be with other horses. It can mean that it has a chronic lameness problem and can only be a companion – as it can not be ridden. It can also mean that it is crazy, and you should not even try to ride it (and maybe not even handle it). Ask if it is a good human companion, a good equine companion or both. Ask how trained it is and if it is sound to ride.

“Light ring work only – 12 year old – good companion” – why does a 12 year old need only light ring work? Is this horse lame?

“Built to carry weight” – this can mean heavy boned, not a bad thing unless you were looking for a more refined horse. Not good if used in conjunction with an ad for an Arabian.

Classified Ads Pertaining to Owner’s Preference
“Serious inquiries only”- this is not a bad thing, just don’t try to barter or dicker with the owner. They have a horse and know what price they want – if you‘re interested call, if not move on.

This may give you some insight into some different interpretations of classified advertisements. Since each horse is an individual, these possible explanations may not apply to all animals. When purchasing a horse, it is best to be in the company of an experienced horseperson who can offer you advice if that person is not you. Happy horsehunting!

References
Steed Read Horseman's Classified, April 2005. Salem, CT.

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