

Different stages of vetting

Buying an equine is a big and often expensive decision so it is important to ensure that you are making the right decision. This not only involves finding an equine which has a pleasant manner, is good to ride, etc. but also looking for an equine that is likely to remain healthy and is suitable for the type and amount of riding that is anticipated. To make a mistake and buy the wrong an equine could be costly and heart-breaking.

Buying a car without an MOT would be unwise and on the same basis buying an equine without a pre-purchase examination by a qualified professional can be both risky and costly and in the case of an equine this examination is known as a vetting. A pre-purchase vetting can not only identify any existing health problems but may also identify potential health risks.

The equine vetting is carried out by a qualified vet on behalf of the purchaser and should be arranged with your own vet or an independent vet. It is important to discuss fully with the vet beforehand the intended type of and regularity of use that the equine is intended for. This ensures that the vet can give an accurate assessment as to whether the equine will be fit for the purpose intended based on its health.

The cost of vetting an equine may vary between veterinary practices and the type of vetting carried out. A basic or insurance 2 stage vetting will normally cost around £75 and a 5 stage vetting will normally cost around £250.

As well as providing a professional opinion on the health and suitability of an equine, a vetting may also be required for insurance purposes. Some insurance companies will not insure an equine unless it has at least had a basic 2 stage vetting carried out.

The 5 stage vetting examination consists of 5 stages detailed below set by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the British Veterinary Association where the equine is examined both at rest and at work and the examination usually lasts for between 2 and 3 hours.

Stage 1

The first stage of the vetting is a preliminary examination with the equine stabled and any abnormal behaviour, signs of unsuitable temperament, etc. will be noted. The vet will also note the general condition of the equine and then move onto examining the equine's heart, lungs and eyes.

The vet will then examine the equine outside whilst stood on a level surface to ensure that the equine's weight is distributed evenly and that it stands straight. The vet will examine the an equine all over to check the eyes, nostrils, lymph glands, muscular development, spine and limbs and also to check for wounds, swellings, growths, scars, heat, etc. Once the vet has checked the equine over thoroughly the vet will proceed to stage 2 of the vetting.

Stage 2

During stage 2 the vet will view the equine at walk on a firm, flat surface to check that the equine shows regularity, suppleness and shows no sign of pain when moving. The vet will then require that the equine is trotted up on a flat, hard surface viewing the equine from behind, in front and from the side. The vet will look for regular, straight movement without restriction or any indication of lameness or pain.

The vet will also view the an equine being turned and moved backwards to further assess the movement of the limbs and will carry out a flexion test - where each limb is lifted and held for a period of time before being released with the an equine immediately being trotted and the vet views whether there is any abnormality in movement as a result of this flexion. The flexion test can be useful in assessing the seriousness of problems already identified and can also expose lameness problems not otherwise found. However, flexion tests can cause lameness in sound an equines if applied too vigorously and so any doubt over the results of this part of the test should be discussed fully with the vet once vetting is completed as some unsoundness after a flexion test may not necessarily mean the an equine will not be suitable for the intended use.

Stage 3

During stage 3 the vet will watch the equine carrying out strenuous exercise in order to note the equine's respiration and heart rate. If the equine is unbroken then exercise will be carried out on the lunge or the equine will be loose schooled, otherwise the equine will normally be ridden. The equine will be required to walk; trot and canter with the vet listening for abnormal sounds and at the end of the exercise the vet will examine the heart and lungs.

Stage 4

For stage 4 of the vetting the equine will be rested for up to 30 minutes and the heart and lungs will be examined again and blood samples taken.

Stage 5

During stage 5 the an equine will be trotted up again in order to note that it continues to move soundly and shows no signs of stiffness after completing stage 3.

Once the vetting is complete the vet will fill out the necessary documentation and either "pass" or "fail" the equine. The results will record any abnormalities and signs of ill-health and will record their significance based on the use the equine is intended for. In some cases there may be areas in which a problem or potential problem has been identified. However, if the an equine is particularly desirable it may be that further tests may be beneficial to establish the seriousness of the problem identified and whether they can easily be treated before deciding whether to buy the an equine or not.

It is not the responsibility of the vet to make the decision as to whether to purchase the equine or not, but to provide a professional opinion of the health of the equine with the intended use borne in mind. If there is any doubt as to the suitability of the equine for its intended purpose based on its health it is important to discuss these fully with the vet so that an informed decision on whether to purchase the equine or not can be made.