



Pre-Purchase Exams – what are they and how can they work for me?

Pre-purchase exams are often performed to help you determine whether the horse you are considering buying is suitable for you. This is also commonly known as a 'vet-check'. There are two different types of pre-purchase exams – a 'limited' or 2 stage exam, and a 'comprehensive' or 5 stage exam. We recommend that a vet check is performed on any potential purchase, as it can often highlight problems that you may not have considered prior to acquiring your horse.

A 2 stage exam involves the vet doing a thorough clinical examination of the horse and looking at the horse walking, backing, turning, trotting in a straight line, on the lunge and also includes flexion tests.

A 5 stage exam involves everything involved in a 2 stage exam as well as examining the horse during and directly after strenuous exercise especially during riding, while they are resting from a period of exercise, and then repeating the examination during walking, trotting, turning and backing.

We also have tailored pre-purchase exams if you are buying a horse specifically for breeding.

We can also offer several additional procedures to help determine whether your horse is suitable for your needs. These include: radiography (can be acquired in the field), upper and lower airway endoscopy, overground endoscopy, electrocardiography (ECG) and ultrasonography.

How to get the most accurate results out of a pre-purchase exam?

Please ensure that the horse you are wishing to purchase is currently performing the same frequency and intensity of exercise that you wish to perform initially. Horses that are not in 'full work' may not show signs of underlying injuries or abnormalities.

Please be aware that we will never 'pass' nor 'fail' a horse. There are very few horses that are completely perfect. The vet check should highlight these issues, and then you can make an informed decision on whether to continue with the purchase of your new horse. A vet check will not assess ability, price, nor talent and is not a guarantee of temperament nor a warranty of good health of the horse. A vet check is a single examination at a point of time. Horses may have different results of vet checks on different days, depending on their level of current exercise and conditions on the day.

For safety of both the horse and handler, we do not recommend performing vet checks in high temperatures (over 35°C for a 2 stage exam, and over 32°C for a 5 stage exam). This is to ensure that there is no potential injuries or illnesses to the horse or handler having to undergo strenuous exercise in high temperatures.

Requirements for performing a pre-purchase examination

While several of our additional procedures can only be performed at our clinic (ultrasonography and endoscopy), we are happy to travel and perform the vet check at a property. There are minimum requirements for ensuring we can perform the most thorough examination on your potential horse at a site that is away from our clinic.

These are:

- A dark stable to fully examine eyes
- A hard (and soft) level trot up area that is suitable to lunge
- Handler capable of trotting the horse
- Tack, a rider and area suitable for more strenuous exercise (5 stage exam only)
- Lunge rein.

Please be aware that if these requirements are not met, we may not be able to proceed with the vet check, or the results of the examination may be limited.