



All About the

Quarter Horse

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The Quarter Horse

About the Quarter Horse

The Quarter Horse, also known as the American Quarter Horse, is the first horse breed that was native to the United States. The horse arose from crossing horses in North America with some of those brought to North America. There's some dispute regarding the exact nature of the breeding, but one thing is for sure--the Quarter Horse is a fine horse.

Quarter Horse Characteristics

Quarter Horses are stocky, well-muscled, and compact. They are 14 to 16 hands (4'8" to 5'4") at the withers (right in front of the saddle) when full-grown. They are frequently used in rodeos and the movies, and as everyday workhorses. Quarter Horses are usually all one color, with a very few white markings. The colors they come in are listed as:

- Bay (brighter than, but similar to Sorrel)
- Black
- Blue Roan (almost a blue-black)
- Brown
- Buckskin
- Chestnut
- Dun
- Gray (which looks white, but isn't called "white")
- Grullo (a nutty, gray-brown)
- Palomino
- Red Dun (almost a pale milk-chocolate)
- Red Roan (taupe)
- Sorrel (a warm red-brown)

In addition to the strong physique, American Quarter Horses are distinguished by several other characteristics:

- Head: short, expressive, chiseled-looking
- Ears: medium-length, pointed
- Neck: medium length, flexible

While all Quarter Horses are similar, there are two distinct "looks" – the stock horses, which can have a jowly appearance because they are so heavily muscled; and the running type, which are a little more sleek and move with a bit more grace.

One of the original jobs for the Quarter Horse was racing quarter-mile distances. They were fast, and they were strong. Although Quarter Horses can do nearly anything – from barrel-racing to dressage – most of them are personal riding horses. The registry was created in 1940, and remains a growing organization (AQHA).



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Selecting Your Quarter Horse

There are several ways to find your new horse. The most common are auctions, horse farms, and newspaper ads. Sometimes equine vets or animal welfare societies will know of a good horse, too. If you are buying your first horse, bring an expert with you – a friend who's ridden for a long time or your instructor are both possible shopping companions. Try to look at a good selection of horses, and be sure to choose one that fits your riding ability. Because horses live 20 to 30 years, getting a horse that is about 10 years old is a good idea – they'll already be trained and will be more docile than a younger horse, but will still have plenty of life and energy. Many people suggest geldings, but it's all about temperament – a well-behaved mare will be a better horse than an ill-mannered gelding. Stallions are a bad idea unless you truly know what you're doing. Finally, be sure that you employ a vet to examine the horse before committing to the purchase.

There is, however, a strong argument for purchasing a foal; that is, developing a bond with a youngster. Your communication with your horse is based on your experience, not how the horse was initially trained. Foals are cheaper than adults – a horse is still a foal at age 1, but a much pricier adult at age 3. Play! Although you can't ride your horse yet, they're still youngsters full of curiosity, intelligence, and youthful "joie de vivre."

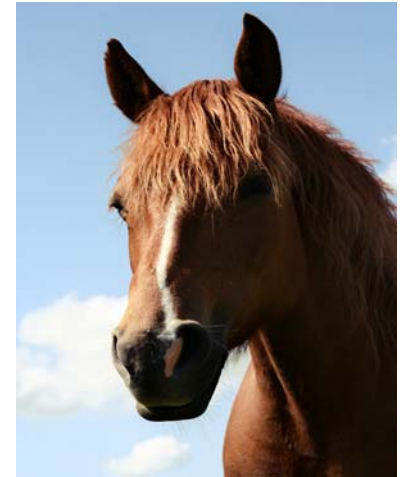
Quarter Horses typically have a calm-temperament. However, there are always exceptions, and you want to be sure the Quarter Horse you get is the one for you.

A Few Words About Auctions

There are no federal laws specifically addressing horse auctions, so regulation is not uniform. However, the USDA has a website listing of Approved Livestock Markets (http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/naahps/approved_markets/); be sure to consult this list before going to an auction. An auction may be a much more difficult place to pick out your new Quarter Horse. The sales are rapid and pre-inspection can be a challenge. Further, the pre-inspection will not allow you enough time to have your vet examine a horse thoroughly. Not that all horse auctions are terrible – far from it. However, as with any purchase, the buyer needs to be savvy, aware, and knowledgeable.

A Few Words About Breeders

Breeders are usually highly focused, and tend to emphasize on the overall appearance, racing ability, and workhorse qualities. They will often be particular about who they sell to, as well. If you are looking for a Quarter Horse with very specific bloodlines or characteristics, buying from a breeder may be the right choice for you. Frequently, breeders have a training program in place for their young horses, so you have the advantage of knowing exactly how your horse was trained.



You'll need these basics for your Quarter Horse. Click the items below to go to CheapPetStore.com to find the best prices for online pet supplies.

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How to Choose your Quarter Horse

At the very least, your Quarter Horse should fit the standards of the breed. Many quarter horses are not registered with the AQHA, which doesn't stop them from being Quarter Horses. A horse cannot be registered unless both its sire and dam are Quarter Horses. The Association can answer further questions regarding registration.

The breed temperament is calm and good-natured, and you should always try to evaluate a horse's mind-set before buying or riding it.

Before You Bring Him Home

Buying a horse is a substantial commitment of time, money, and energy. Be sure that you have a place to stable your horse, or that he will be well cared for if the place is not your home, and that you will have time to be social with your horse. Horses have personalities and attitudes, and you want to be sure that you can spend enough time with your horse so it will relate to you.

The Quarter Horse Foal

Foal coat colors often do not stabilize until the horse is 2 years old. By that age, the colt or filly may well have gone through several changes prior to growing in an adult coat. A young horse should not be ridden until they are old enough and large enough.

The Quarter Horse Adult

The adult horse is large enough to be ridden, and old enough to have left childhood behind. Three years is an average maturing age for horses, and they are in their prime until about 10. At 10 or so, they are still prime pleasure animals, but will be getting up into middle age.

The Quarter Horse Senior

Horses can live into their 30s and 40s. As the horse ages, it will have different needs. You'll need to be sure that your horse is still getting regular dental checkups, and you may wish to schedule them more frequently. Wet your older horse's feed and be sure that his feed has more digestible fiber and a bit more fat than his younger companions. Make sure that your older horse's forage is especially nutritious and has lots of fiber.

Medical Considerations

Horses do have some common ailments. Some of them can be headed off with appropriate care including regular vaccinations, daily hoof and leg care, and your own daily evaluation of your horse's condition. Some of the things that can afflict your horse include:



You'll need these basics for your Quarter Horse foal. Click the items below to go to CheapPetStore.com to find the best prices online.

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- Internal Parasites, including:
 - ✓ Ascarids (roundworms)
 - ✓ Bots
 - ✓ Pinworms
 - ✓ Strongyles (bloodworms)
- Tooth problems: horse's teeth continually grow, necessitating regular 'floating' (filing) of your horse's teeth
- Hoof and leg problems
 - ✓ Brittle/dry hooves
 - ✓ Cuts and bruises
 - ✓ Infections
 - ✓ Laminitis
 - ✓ Thrush
- Gas and colic

Necessary Items

Tack

You will need tack appropriate to the style of riding you do. At the least, consider a complete saddle, reins, headstall, bits, lead ropes, halter, and pads. You should also have blankets and grooming supplies. Martingales are sometimes useful to keep the horse from raising his head too high and to give newer riders something to grip other than the reins.

Some people also like to have horse boots or leg bandages to support their horse's legs and hooves while the horse is working.

Feed

Ideally, the bulk of your horse's food should be hay (not straw). There are a variety of hays out there, and you may need to try several until you find out the one your horse prefers. Since there's almost as many hays as there are grasses, the variety is enormous. Alfalfa is very high-quality nutritionally, so you may wish to include that, depending on your horse's activity level. Grain is needed, but only absolutely required for horses working a lot, pregnant mares, and growing colts and fillies. However, grain is a treat, and makes for good bonding time with your horse.

Leave salt available for your horse, and plenty of fresh water. You want to be sure that your horse has enough water to avoid any tummy trouble.



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Proper Feeding

Horses are nibblers because their stomach is rather small in proportion to their body size. Therefore, feeding them three times a day is often recommended.

How Much To Feed Youngsters

As the young horse grows, you'll want to "creep feed." Creep feeding is giving the foal food in addition to its mother's milk, and continues until the baby is fully weaned at 4 to 6 months of age. The feed should be high-quality hay and specialty feeds (pellet or grain) specifically designed for the growing horse. Start with a pound per month of age (a 2-month old would be creep-fed 2 pounds a day, for example). If the dam is not providing sufficient milk, you'll need to feed the baby more to provide all its necessary nutrition. Once the foal is four months old or so, and is consuming four pounds of feed a day, it is usually ready to be weaned. Once weaned, feed the young horse roughly 1.5% of its body weight (instead of the 2 #/100 # of horse, this would be 1½ #/100 # of horse). As Junior grows, you can feed him commensurate with his size and activity level.



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How Much to Feed Adult Horses

Hay: 2 pounds hay/100 pounds of horse
Grain: No more than ½ pound of grain/100 pounds of body weight.



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