

# Bringing Home a Horse

By Heather Spencer

Getting your first horse is always an exciting time. If you can get things off on the right foot, um, hoof, you will have a better chance for a fun and safe experience. When your new horse arrives, keep things quiet and without a lot of fuss. Lead him around to see his new surroundings, then make sure he has hay or grass and water. If he is alone in a barn, put a radio on for company.

If there are other horses where your horse will be living, keep the new horse separate from the other horses for a couple of days. Your horse

should be able to see the others, but not have contact over fences, as this is a sure way to have injury to horses and fences. After a couple of days, gradually introduce the new horse to the other horses, beginning with the most mild-tempered of the herd. In this way, the new horse will find its place in the pecking order and not get beaten up in the process. Do the integration during daylight hours. Horses meeting for the first time will normally squeal and strike with a front leg. Make sure you do not stand between two horses meeting for the first time. If your horse is on a lead rope, be sure to wear gloves and do not wind the rope around your hand, in case the horse

should move away suddenly.

This is good time to inspect your stalls and fencing for any nails sticking out, loose boards, stray wires, etc. A new horse will be distracted by his new surroundings and will be more prone to injury.

Also try to find out what types of feed the horse was getting at his previous home. Horses are delicate creatures and any sudden change in diet can produce colic. Consult your local veterinarian about vaccinations and de-worming. Hooves will need to be trimmed regularly by a qualified blacksmith every 6-8 weeks. Horses

generally enjoy a good brushing, especially in the spring when they will shed out their winter coats. It is also a good way to bond with your horse and get to know him.

Be aware that horses are flight animals. Their first reaction to anything they deem to be threatening is to run. Speaking calmly will reassure them and build their trust in you. Try to see things from a horse's perspective and al-

ways keep safety as your first priority.

Congratulations! You've just made a new friend!



*Photo of Skotia Boyd and horse, Zeus.  
Photo taken by Cassandra LeBlanc Chowns*

*Heather Spencer runs Harrowsmith Horse Country, selling equestrian equipment and casual country clothing. heather@harrowsmithhorsecountry.com (613) 372-5085*

