

Natural HORSE

M A G A Z I N E

WHEN HOOVES GO BAD,

LOOK UP!

WHOLISTIC REHABILITATION

Shiatsu:

HEALING from HEAD TO TOE

**HOOBOOT FIT,
NOT FITS!**

RELOCATING?

Help your horse
(and yourself!) with

essential oils

**HOLIDAY
GIFT
GUIDE
INSIDE**



Rebel, Lisa's first horse as an adult

Photo by Kenny Williams, If Your Horse Could Talk

Are You Ready for a Horse?

by Lisa Ross-Williams

It's a common scenario - someone who has always had a love for horses finally gets to fulfill the dream of getting a horse... or perhaps gets back into horses after many, many years. However, bringing an equine into your life is a BIG decision and rarely is it easy or the "riding off into the sunset" like in the movies. According to an article "Starting Off Right" by Kim Wende, "80% of first time horse owners sell their horse within two years or less." Usually, it is because the person was not prepared to begin with.

In the first article in this new column, we'll cover some basic information and pose questions to ask yourself to help you decide if you are ready to take the plunge. In subsequent issues, we will cover finding the right horse, getting ready for your horse, and bringing your equine home, all of course considering the whole horse.

Why do you want a horse?

Again, put the romantic side of riding off into the sunset on a beautiful horse aside for right now and answer the following question:

What role do you see the horse (your new equine companion) playing in your life: a trail riding horse, a competitive athlete, a means for having camaraderie with horse friends, a farm/ ranch helper, or other purpose? The answers to this question will help decide if you are ready for a horse and what equine will be best for you.

If the answer is not clear to you, perhaps it would be best to spend some time with someone else's horses. Find someone or an organization who follows a natural approach and offer to donate your time in exchange for horse time. Perhaps a local rescue, natural horsemanship instructor or a therapeutic riding program might be good options.

Do you have the time, energy and money to fully support an equine partner?

Time - Are you willing to spend time researching about proper natural horse care BEFORE your horse arrives? This includes nutrition, equine behavior, hoof and dental care, horsemanship, etc.

In addition to the time required for feeding, scooping poop, keeping water tanks clean, grooming, cleaning hooves, etc., there also needs to be enough time for bonding and building the relationship. This is a HUGE commitment and horse guardians do not have the option of skipping these tasks, even when sick or tired. It is not fair to horses, who are social creatures, to live without lots of interaction with their family. Plus, depending on your level of

experience, time for natural horsemanship lessons may need to be in the mix.

Money - The initial purchase price is *just the beginning*. If the initial investment is a stretch for you, do NOT continue with your plans.

- **Feed costs** - Proper nutrition is the foundation for equine health, so diet is not an area you can scrimp on; if you do, you will be paying for it in health issues.

Perhaps you are blessed to have a quality grass pasture, which helps with costs, however even then most horses require some additional supplementation. I always suggest a supplement that balances out the forage (forage/ hay testing is key), using natural sources when possible. If the horse requires hay, that is a huge expense because equines are meant to have continuous access to forage. Hay prices have skyrocketed for a number of reasons and depending on your location, can be as high as \$15-\$20 per 80 to 120 pound bale of grass hay. A horse requires 2% of his ideal body weight per day in hay so a 1000-pound horse needs 20 pounds per day. Most large square bales weigh between 100 to 120 pounds so that equates to a bale every six days, in addition to the supplements cost.

- **Equipment and supplies** - What you plan to do with your horse will dictate what equipment you need but at the very least you need a hand-tied rope halter, lead rope, grooming supplies and saddle, pad and headgear if you plan to ride. You also will need feeding pans, water tank(s), natural shampoo and insect repellent. Do NOT scrimp on a saddle; it needs to be of good quality and must comfortably fit your horse, and you!

- **Health care** - This is an on-going expense that many first-time horse people do not take seriously enough. It includes but is not limited to:

Hoof care: Your equine will need to be trimmed every 4-6 weeks by a qualified natural trimmer with an average cost of \$50-\$65 per trim. Perhaps you have the desire to do the trimming yourself, which is a viable option if you are physically fit enough, but you will still need to pay for training plus the cost of basic supplies such as a quality rasp, hoof knives and stand, and possibly nippers.

Dentistry: Proper equine dentistry by a Certified Equine Den-

tist is extremely important. All horses need an annual exam and work if needed; the average cost runs between \$140-\$250, plus travel expenses if you do not have a dental practitioner in your area.

Emergencies: Even with the best of care, horses are horses and eventually they will need care by a veterinarian whether for an injury, colic, allergy, etc. Depending on the circumstances, this can run from hundreds of dollars to thousands, and up.

- Facility - If your property is not set up properly for horses, this can be a big expense. Keeping a horse in a stall or small pen 24/7 is *not* an option; horses, to be healthy, must have enough room to move - which equates to fencing as well as some type of shelter from inclement weather.

- A humane end - "Euthanasia" means ending a life humanely, painlessly, to relieve suffering from an incurable illness or injury. Find out your local veterinarian's fee for this, as well as who will haul away the carcass and how much that will cost. Then set aside at least that much money so that if the unexpected catastrophe happens, you are prepared to have your horse's life *humanely* ended, by injection or even by a professional shooter (an option especially if you intend to properly compost your drug-free horse). Slaughter is NEVER humane, whether near or far. Putting aside this \$ to honor your partner with a loving passing is something that EVERY person who has a horse must do. It is not a pleasant responsibility, but it is one that goes along with having a horse.

So, if you have gone through the above checklist and are willing and able to fulfill your responsibilities, you are on your way to having a wonderful relationship with an equine partner.

In the next issue, we'll cover the topic of finding the right horse. In the meantime, start doing your research on proper, natural horse care. Some good places to start are listed below. 🍷

For more information:

Down-To-Earth Natural Horse Care by Lisa Ross-Williams

Making Natural Hoof Care Work for You by Pete Ramey

A Health Horse, the Natural Way by Catherine Bird

Discovering Natural Horsemanship, a Beginners Odyssey by Tom Moates

Natural Horse Magazine online archives, www.naturalhorse.com

Natural Horse Talk Links page, www.naturalhorsetalk.com/links.html

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About the author:

Lisa Ross-Williams is a natural horse care consultant and host of the If Your Horse Could Talk webcast available at www.naturalhorsetalk.com. Lisa has completed the Basic Veterinary Homeopathy course through the British Institute of Homeopathy, is certified in Equine Naturopathy through the American Council of Animal Naturopathy, and holds a degree in Environmental Plant Science (special interest in organics). She is a seasoned writer, Associate Editor of *Natural Horse Magazine* and author of *Down-To-Earth Natural Horse Care*, available at: www.down-to-earthnhc.com





Finding the Right Horse

by Lisa Ross-Williams

Photos by Kenny Williams, If Your Horse Could Talk

Are you well-suited for a high-energy horse?

In the last issue, we explored whether you are truly ready to bring an equine into your life. In this issue, we look into finding the right horse for you.

Matching Horse and Human

This principle is one of the most important keys to finding the right horse.

1. Define what type of person you are. Timid or confident? A leader or a follower? Emotionally fit or unpredictable? Introvert or extrovert? This will help determine which type of horse might be best for you. For instance, an unconfident, nervous human would not be a good leader for a shy and/or nervous horse whereas a confident and competent person might get bored with a Steady-Eddie as he may not be challenging enough. Parelli Natural Horsemanship offers their Horsenality™/ Humanality™ profiling with Match Report (www.parelli.com) to help people determine what type of person they are and what type of horse personality might be best.

2. What do you want to do with your horse? Quiet trail rides? Competition such as dressage or reining? Driving? Or do you want a backyard companion to hang out with? Each of these requires a horse with certain training, experience or personality.

3. Is he a match for your horse handling skills, riding ability or experience? Have you learned how to be a good leader for a horse? One very common mistake I see is an inexperienced person getting a young horse. Rarely are they able to “learn together” and this often results in injuries and a loss of confidence in both horse and hu-

man. Instead, look for a mature equine who has lots of experience in different situations; such a horse can be a great teacher.

4. Match your horse's energy to your riding schedule. Some horses are just naturally high-energy and they will not be happy if your schedule or physical fitness only allows infrequent and/or short rides. On the other hand, if you want to do endurance riding, don't pick an equine who enjoys a leisurely lifestyle.

Finally, don't get locked into a certain breed or color based on your fantasy. Personality and ability match is much more important.

Where to Look

You can find horses for sale in your newspaper, at your local rescue, on Craig's List, at reputable breeders, and through referrals from friends. Many people advise not to adopt from a rescue but I mostly disagree with that. Especially in today's economy, there are a number of fantastic horses placed in rescues, often because their people could no longer afford to feed them. I would not suggest buying or adopting a horse who has serious health issues, or who has been abused (because he may be carrying all sorts of emotional baggage), at least not for your first horse.

Two venues I advise against are: 1) auctions, as people who do this to a horse probably did not care for them properly to begin with; 2) horse dealers who are in the business of buying and selling horses, because their motivation is profit first and they often do not know the horse.



Would you be happier with a Steady Eddie?

Check Them Out

Physically

*Is the overall appearance healthy? Hair, hooves, body weight, the look in his eye?

*Is his movement smooth and confident? Or choppy with apparent pain or stiffness?

A pre-purchase veterinary exam is a smart choice, and since we are focusing on the horse as a whole, a holistic veterinary exam is best. (See NHM Volume 11 Issue 1, *The Holistic Pre-Purchase Exam*, www.naturalhorse.com.)

Emotionally

*Is he engaged and interested in his environment, herd members and caretakers?

*Do you sense any fear or anger?

Watch out for what I term a Zombie Horse, who may appear docile but in all reality has emotionally shut down due to abuse or neglect. (See NHM Volume 11 Issue 2, *Bringing Zombie Horses Back to Life*, www.naturalhorse.com.)

Training - unmounted

*Evaluate the horse's training levels on respecting your space



Rebel, my first horse as an adult. I knew he was my soul horse.


(presuming you are demonstrating leadership ability), being tied, leading, picking up his feet, loading in a trailer, standing still for grooming and saddling, and groundwork tasks if trained in a natural horsemanship approach.

Training - mounted

If you do plan to ride, then you - or a trusted, experienced friend - should actually ride the horse not only in an arena, but also away from his normal environment. If you are not comfortable with this, have the seller do so, watching for signs of cooperation from the horse.

Finally, beware of a sedated horse. This practice is more common than you might think. Signs to look for include poor hoof placement (toe dragging, etc.), loose lower lip, dull appearance in the eyes, sluggish pupillary light reflex. Another concern would be a horse with chronic founder or navicular who has had a nerve block so he appears to be sound, but that is often difficult to detect. If you suspect either of these might be the case, perhaps "drop in" unannounced using the excuse, "I was just in the area and wanted to stop in." Or hire a veterinarian to come out for a second visit without telling the seller that you are hiring him.

Now, with all that said.... you may find that your intuition is telling you very strongly that a certain horse is just meant to be with you; a love-at-first-sight experience for both of you. I know this to be true as it happened with Rebel, my number one and first horse as an adult. The seller tried to talk me out of it stating he was a man's horse; Rebel actually bit me on the neck; he was unrideable and very dominant. But I knew deep in my gut he was my soul horse and although it took a lot of work to build a partnership, it is magical and I don't regret my decision.

In the next issue, we'll get ready to bring your new horse home. 

About the author:

Lisa Ross-Williams is a natural horse care consultant and host of the If Your Horse Could Talk webcast available at www.naturalhorsetalk.com. Lisa has completed the Basic Veterinary Homeopathy course through the British Institute of Homeopathy, is certified in Equine Naturopathy through the American Council of Animal Naturopathy, and holds a degree in Environmental Plant Science (special interest in organics). She is a seasoned writer, Associate Editor of *Natural Horse Magazine* and author of *Down-To-Earth Natural Horse Care*, available at: www.down-to-earthnhc.com



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Getting Ready for Your New Horse

by Lisa Ross-Williams

Provide your horse with a safe living area that is functional for you yet aligns with his true equine nature. Keep seasonal changes in mind as well.

Thus far in this 4-part series, we have explored whether you are really ready for a horse, and how you can find the right equine partner. In this issue, we'll cover getting prepared to bring your new horse home.

Facility Set-Up

Strive to set up your horse's living area so it aligns as closely as possible with his true equine nature. This includes free movement in a stimulating environment. Horses are built to move, so provide enough room for lots of movement. Solid, safe fencing is most preferable; however electric fencing might be an option. (See NHM Volume 12, Issue 5 for more information on electric fencing.) Some people use a track system to encourage movement (see NHM Volume 12, Issue 1).

A fancy barn is nice, but it is not required. Horses don't normally seek out a closed-in shelter. They are able to deal with seasonal changes naturally. Therefore, a mare motel or even a two- or three-sided shelter is usually adequate.

You will want a number of easily accessible water faucets and if you live in a very cold climate, they will need to be protected against freezing.

Feed and supplies storage -You'll need an enclosed space for stor-

ing your hay, feed, tack and equipment. This structure needs to be secure against the weather, bugs and rodents. It is a horrible feeling to find your saddle chewed on by mice, pack rats or squirrels, not to mention the possibility of feed contamination by rodent droppings.

Companions - It's important to remember that horses naturally are herd animals. It is a strong instinct; the herd provides safety and socialization. However, taking two horses in at the beginning of your horse guardian journey may not be immediately possible. Perhaps another companion such as a goat or sheep is within your limits. Also, for a solitary horse, it's imperative you spend a lot of time with her, acting as a surrogate herd mate.

Supplies and equipment - At the very least you will need a hand-tied halter, a 12-foot lead rope, and grooming supplies. If you plan to ride, you'll need a comfortably fitting saddle, a saddle pad, and protective headgear for yourself. You will also need feeding pans, water tank(s), natural shampoo and insect repellent.

Feed supplies - If you do not have adequate pasture, you'll need to find a supplier of quality grass hay. Remember that horses are natural foragers and are meant to eat on an almost continuous basis. Plan on feeding 1½ - 2 percent of your horse's ideal body weight in hay per day, either free-choice or frequent feedings.

Most often, horses need additional supplementation because most hay and pastures are not grown in fertile, biologically active, organic soil. If the soil is depleted, the crops grown on it will be nutritionally lacking. It's best to use a supplement designed for your local hay. Addition of ground flax will provide the Omega 3 fatty acids while the addition of fresh vegetables and fruit offers enzymes, phytochemicals, antioxidants, whole food synergy and variety.

Your Equine Care Team

Please do not wait until you have a crisis to pick your equine care team. Be proactive and take your time finding qualified individuals whom you trust and respect. I always conduct an interview prior to picking an equine professional.

Natural hoof trimmer - Since your horse will need to be trimmed every four to six weeks, this practitioner is very important. Just as with all professionals, there are the good, bad and the ugly. One initial place to start is the American Hoof Association, www.americanhoofassociation.org. This group is not necessarily aligned with one specific hoof trimming technique, which is good as you don't want to get pulled into a cult-like mentality. Ask for references and if possible go visit some of their client's horses.

Some things to look for in a trimmer:

- He/she is an educator as well as a trimmer.
- He/she is always a student of the horse, always open to learning more.
- He/she has a basic working knowledge of the whole horse.
- He/she possesses a great stall-side manner and utilizes natural horsemanship techniques.
- He/she looks at each horse and hoof individually.

Certified equine dentist - Your equine friend will need an annual exam and possibly dental work by a Certified Equine Dentist. Most conventional veterinarians are not trained in thorough, balanced dentistry and merely perform a basic float. For more information on proper equine dentistry, see NHM archives, www.naturalhorse.com.

Conventional veterinarian - Let's face it—if you have horses, you'll require the services of a conventional veterinarian, whether it be for an emergency like colic or an injury, or simply to have blood drawn

to determine if your horse is metabolically challenged. It can sometimes be challenging to find a conventional vet who is also open to a wholistic way of thinking. But, use caution if the individual seems over-powering or uses fear and intimidation. Always remember you are the client. However, it's important to show you are a responsible, educated horse guardian.

Wholistic veterinarian - It's always great to have a wholistic vet on your equine care team. Many of these professionals offer distance consultations via phone or email. For a list of wholistic vets, visit www.holisticvetlist.com

Natural horsemanship instructor - Especially when first getting back into horses, it's important to have some support on the natural horsemanship side. By appreciating that communication, understanding and mutual respect are important, you can open a whole new world with your horse. There are many natural horsemanship programs and instructors available.

As your excitement builds while preparing for the arrival of your new equine partner, know that proper preparation goes a long way toward instilling an easy transition.

In the next issue, we'll cover bringing your horse home. ♪

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Lisa Ross-Williams is a natural horse care consultant and host of the If Your Horse Could Talk webcast available at www.naturalhorsetalk.com. Lisa has completed the Basic Veterinary Homeopathy course through the British Institute of Homeopathy, is certified in Equine Naturopathy through the American Counsel of Animal Naturopathy, and holds a degree in Environmental Plant Science (special interest in organics). She is a seasoned writer, Associate Editor of *Natural Horse Magazine* and author of *Down-To-Earth Natural Horse Care*, available at: www.down-to-earthnhc.com



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BRINGING YOUR HORSE Home

by Lisa Ross-Williams

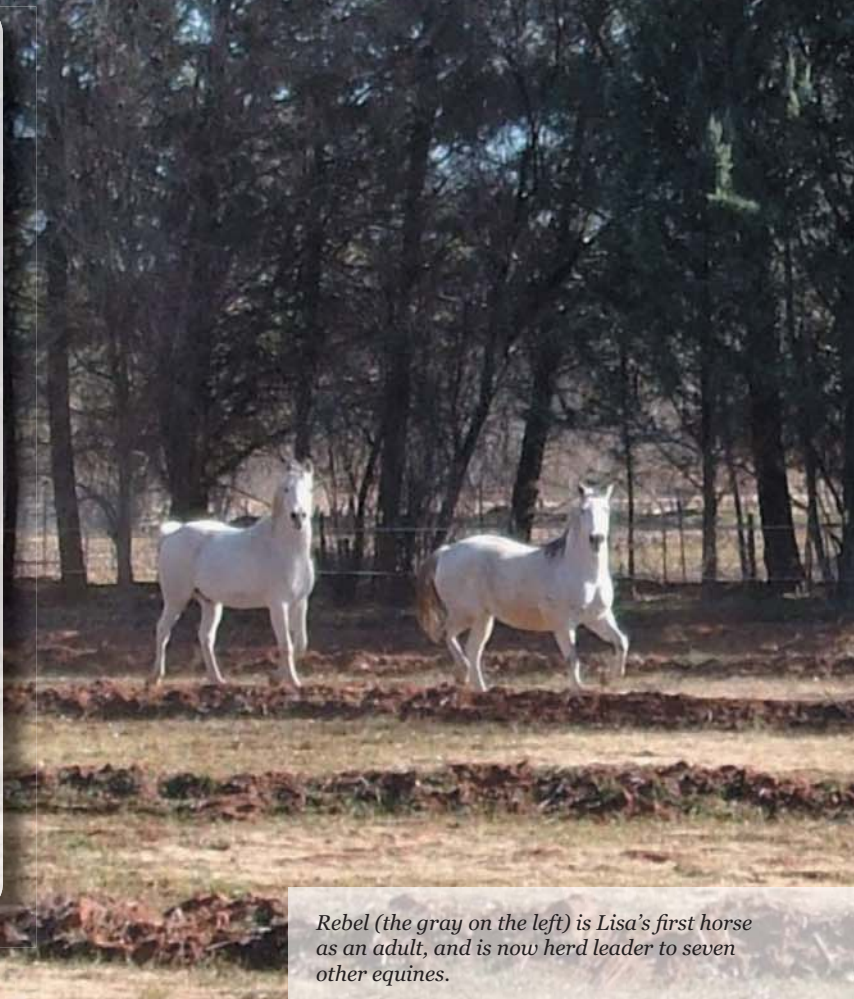
Whether you are fulfilling the dream of purchasing your first horse, or perhaps getting back into horses after many, many years, I hope the previous three articles in this series have been helpful. In part 1, (NHM volume 14, Issue 1) we covered *Are You Ready for a Horse*; part 2 gave tips on *Finding the Right Horse*; part 3 explored *Getting Ready for Your Horse*. In the final installment of this series, we address bringing your horse home.

If you are like most people, the night before bringing your horse home is often a sleepless one. Along with the excitement, there is probably also some stress (and, possibly, the question “What have I done?”). But knowing you are properly prepared can afford you some peace of mind.

PROPER PREPARATION

You don’t want to be busy tying up loose ends when your new horse arrives, so ensure the following are done in advance:

- Water troughs are filled with fresh water.
- Small amounts of grass hay are scattered in piles throughout his area.
- Halter, lead rope, and natural insect repellent (if necessary) are easily accessible.
- Everyone else in your family has been asked to be in a calm state of mind.



Rebel (the gray on the left) is Lisa’s first horse as an adult, and is now herd leader to seven other equines.

GETTING YOUR HORSE HOME

Unless you have acquired your new horse within walking distance of your home, he'll need to be transported by trailer. Hopefully you have selected an equine who is comfortable with being hauled. Driving a truck pulling a trailer takes some practice. If you are not an experienced hauler, ideally either the seller or an experienced friend will do the driving for you.

PROPER INTRODUCTION TO HIS LIVING AREA

Moving to a new home is a BIG deal for horses and they often are quite emotional; prey animals who are upset often do not think clearly. I suggest calmly walking your horse throughout his entire living area before taking off his halter to allow him to explore on his own.

FLOWER ESSENCE AND ESSENTIAL OIL SUPPORT FOR BOTH OF YOU

Welcoming a new horse is emotional for both horse and handler. Consider using some Bach Rescue Remedy® in your horse's water tank and in your bottle of water. Flower essences are vibrational therapy, and work on an emotional level. Rescue Remedy is a blend of five essences that is used in times of stress, trauma, illness or injury. Follow the directions on the bottle.

According to Nayana Morag's relocation article (page 18 in this issue), "Essential oils can be helpful physically, emotionally, and mentally when relocating your horse." One valuable basic essential oil to consider is Violet Leaf (*Viola odorata*).

SPEND TIME JUST BEING WITH YOUR HORSE



Spend time just being with your horse without an agenda.

It's imperative that you and your new horse spend time together without an agenda. Set aside time to just sit with him while he's eating, or stroke him while he's napping - anything that doesn't include "doing something." Do you know your horse's favorite itchy spots? Do you know horses have belly buttons that are a great spot to scratch? Take plenty of time getting to know each other before starting to ride.

Now, my congratulations, and welcome into the horse world. I guarantee it will be full of love, joy, adventures, challenges, and the occasional heartbreak. He will teach you about empathy, unconditional love, empowerment, humility, and integrity. I, for one, could never imagine a life without my equine friends.





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ALMOST THERE, BUT FIRST...

- ✓ You know why you want a horse.
- ✓ You can commit the time, energy, and money.
- ✓ You have become knowledgeable about proper, natural horse care.
- ✓ Have you found the right horse?
- ✓ You have matched horse to human.
- ✓ You have purchased or adopted from a reputable source.
- ✓ You have examined him physically, emotionally, and for the appropriate level of training.
- ✓ Have you prepared for your new horse?
- ✓ Your facility has been set up including environment, feed supplies, horse supplies, and equipment.
- ✓ You have interviewed and selected your equine health care team.

For additional suggestions on easing the stresses of relocation, read *Help Your Horse with Relocation* by Nayana Morag in this issue (page 18). ☺☺

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Lisa Ross-Williams is a natural horse care consultant and host of the If Your Horse Could Talk webcast available at www.naturalhorsetalk.com. She has completed the Basic Veterinary Homeopathy course through the British Institute of Homeopathy, and holds a degree in Environmental Plant Science (special interest in organics). Lisa is the Publisher/Editor-In-Chief of Natural Horse Magazine and the author of the award winning book, *Down-To-Earth Natural Horse Care* available at www.down-to-earthnhc.com.