

Is Pony Ownership For You?



Second Chance Horse Rescue Inc. actively promotes responsible and compassionate equine ownership practices and care. This document is provided to assist you with sound and responsible pony ownership information.

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Starting from scratch: Is a pony for you?

Ponies can be complicated animals to care for. Owning a pony can be the most rewarding experience for yourself and your child but responsible pony care takes a lot of time, effort and expense out of your week. Owning a pony is a big commitment to take on but for those who enjoy the lifestyle it can become the fondest of memories to look back on.

To be a responsible pony owner, you must first ask yourself whether pony ownership is suitable for you and your family. Be honest with yourself and decide with your family whether you are all prepared to make the changes necessary to have a pony in your life.

- Do you have **time** for a pony? Ponies require grooming, feeding, cleaning up after and exercise every day, and you will also need to schedule lessons on pony care (and riding) as there is so much to know. Most competitions and Pony Clubs take up time on weekends and time to prepare for too. (see Choosing An Instructor)
- Do you have sufficient **funds** to care for a pony? The purchase price of the pony is always the cheapest part. (see Expenses)
- If the pony is to be for your child/children, you will need to ensure the **child is supervised** by an experienced adult at all times so that the child can be assisted in learning to read the pony's body language, learn how to act safely around their pony and handle the pony safely.
- Do you have sufficient **experience** to care for a pony? Ponies are complicated animals to own and it takes years to learn to care for them and handle them safely and correctly. You never stop learning about ponies. (see Experience & Safety)
- Do you have sufficient **housing** to keep a pony? Ponies require safe fencing, shelter and clean fresh water not to mention a clean safe environment and companionship. (see Housing)

Experience & Safety

It takes a lot of experience to care for and handle ponies safely. All children should be supervised when working around or handling ponies. Ponies often weigh around ten times more than your child, and are flight animals with a strong self preservation instinct so potential for accidents is high without sufficient experience in care and handling. Ponies are also highly intelligent and can be quick to take advantage of an inexperienced or nervous handler to turn a situation to suit themselves.

If you are new to ponies, we advise riding and care lessons before taking the plunge. This also gives you the opportunity to see if pony ownership is something you and your child are really keen on once you've had some first-hand experience caring for one under the eye and guidance of a reputable horse person.

To own a pony safely you need to learn about:

- The normal vital signs of ponies and how to take them
- Common illnesses and how to prevent them
- Pony body language and behaviour
- How to safely catch, groom, lead, rug and handle your pony
- How to safely and correctly saddle up and unsaddle your pony
- Keeping a pony healthy including vaccinations, hoof care, dental care, diet and housing

On average it takes approximately 3 years of regular (once weekly) care lessons to learn enough about correct and humane care and handling practices to sufficiently provide for a pony. And don't forget that as you learn, your coordination and confidence will get better, which also makes you safer when handling ponies.

If your pony is to be for riding, it is very strongly recommended that regular riding lessons with a reputable and experienced instructor are undertaken first and that once a pony is brought into your family you continue on with these lessons just as regularly. This is to ensure that both pony and rider continue to develop in ability and confidence and to ensure that safe and ethical riding practices are maintained.

How To Choose An Instructor

When choosing an instructor to educate you on riding and care, please consider the following points:

- Is the instructor mature-aged and experienced? Many less than reputable riding facilities employ young teenagers (sometimes as young as 13!) to instruct which may save the school money but puts yourself and your child at risk.
- Do the Instructor's own animals look happy and healthy? Do a visit to your prospective Instructor's facility and see if their horses look healthy, of a good weight, bright in themselves, willing to work and have smooth rounded hooves with no cracks, chips or loose nails in them.
- Are the facilities safe? On your visit check to see that the arena is clean and well maintained, that the fences and gates are secure and that there are no young children running around unsupervised or dogs yapping at the ponies heels etc



- Watch a lesson. Do you feel that you would be comfortable in this lesson, that you or your child would learn and enjoy themselves? Do the students look happy with their lesson and do they look as though they are being taught to ride well? Do you feel you would get along well with this instructor? Do the ponies look willing and healthy? None appear to be limping or misbehaving badly? (all ponies misbehave at some point but rearing, bucking and bolting is not acceptable behaviour for novice riders to be forced to deal with)
- Does the Instructor teach students on their own horses or must students bring a horse? And if you buy a pony, would you be able to bring it for lessons with this instructor?
- Does the Instructor teach pony care and management also?
- Does the school do extra activities for students such as beach trips, schooling shows and opportunities to watch their farrier or dentist at work?
- Does the school require students to purchase their own safety helmets or are these provided for students to borrow?

Many Riding Schools also run holiday camps and some also do part-leases on the school's ponies where the students can 'own' the horse for a day and are made responsible for its care for that time which is also a good opportunity for you to learn more about what is involved in owning a pony.

Once you have visited a couple of schools you will have a fair idea on which one you would like to attend. Even if your child attends Pony Club, it is best to also have lessons in-between rallies as once a month rallies alone are not enough to sufficiently educate your child on riding and keep them developing in ability and confidence.

Don't forget, even Olympic Riders have regular lessons! It is vital for the safety and confidence of your child, not to mention the welfare and happiness of the equine, even if you buy your own pony, that you continue lessons regardless of experience level or age.

It is too easy to develop poor riding habits without realising and a good coach can assist in preventing small problems from arising and becoming large problems! Most 'problems' with horses are caused by the rider/handler.



Reputable Riding Schools and Instructors

Below is a list of some riding schools and Instructors who have a good reputation for quality instruction, good equine management practices and consider their horse's welfare as a priority.

These are certainly not the only places available from which to learn, there are many riding establishments in and around the Perth Metro area however these are a selection of schools that Second Chance has heard good reports about in the recent past. We strongly advise all parents to 'vet' any school or instructor you wish to ride with for suitability and ethical care practices themselves as Second Chance does not take any responsibility for these businesses.

Champion Lakes Riding Centre – Champion Lakes

Meg Freeman; 041 794 3505

Riding education mainly in the 3 Olympic disciplines(dressage, jumping, cross country), students have opportunities for trail riding, going to shows and training days, day camps during the holidays.

Tallarook Park Riding School – Champion Lakes

Amanda Taylor; 0412 456 184

Riding education mainly in the 3 Olympic disciplines(dressage, jumping, cross country) although hacking & games are also available. Opportunities for students to attend shows, Pony Club, and camps on school horses.

Oriel Park Riding School – Henley Brook

Alisa Dodds; 0438 855 579

Riding education mainly in the 3 Olympic disciplines (dressage, jumping, cross country). Camps during school holidays. Opportunities for students to go to shows, beach trips, trail rides etc.

Foxwood Riding School – Wattle Grove

(08) 9453 2490

Riding education mainly in the 3 Olympic disciplines (dressage, jumping, cross country), camps during the holidays, opportunities for students to go on trail rides, to shows and training days etc.

Wexford Park Training & Agistment Centre – Darling Downs

Tanya Spiers

0409 121 018

Riding education mainly in the 3 Olympic disciplines (dressage, jumping, cross country), camps during the holidays, opportunities for students to go on trail rides, to shows and training days etc.



Centura Riding School - Wanneroo

Roz Tippett

(08) 9405 2253

Riding education mainly in the 3 Olympic disciplines(dressage, jumping, cross country) although hacking & games are also available. Opportunities for students to attend shows, Pony Club, and camps on school horses.

Expenses

These expenses are general and **average** prices and you may find that your own pony could cost more, or less to purchase and maintain. Purchasing a pony is the very cheapest part of pony ownership.

Purchasing your pony:

- Purchasing a well schooled pony with a good temperament for riding/Pony Club from around \$3,000
- Purchasing a well schooled winning show pony, or top level competition pony up to \$20,000

Routine care:

****For humane and correct care, EVERY equine needs these things even if they are not ridden.****

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| • Feed & supplements | Per week for SMALL PONY BREEDS | \$ 15 |
| • Feed & supplements | Per week for GOOD DOER HORSE BREEDS (eg Arabs) | \$ 30 |
| • Feed & supplements | Per week for POOR DOER HORSE BREEDS (eg Thoroughbreds) | \$ 60 |
| • Hoof care (trimming only) | Every 4 – 6 weeks | \$ 45 |
| • Hoof care (full set of shoes) | Every 4 – 6 weeks | \$ 110 |
| • Worming | Every 6 weeks | \$ 20 |
| • Dental work | Every year for mature equine, or every 6 months for older equine | \$ 120 |
| • Vaccinations | Every year | \$ 40 |

Agistment/Boarding

(if you do not have your own property – these are **average** prices)

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| • Do It Yourself Board | Weekly | \$ 40 |
| • Part Board | Weekly | \$ 65 |
| • Full Board | Weekly | \$ 150 |



Other Expenses

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| • Saddle Fitting | Prior to purchase of saddle & check up if problems arise | \$ 150 |
| • Chiropractic work | Should the equine show signs of stiffness/soreness | \$ 90 |
| • Bowen/message therapy | Should the equine show signs of stiffness/soreness | \$ 60 |



Lessons:

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| • Private lessons – hourly - instructor comes to you | \$ 90 |
| • Private lessons – hourly – at riding school on school pony | \$ 75 |
| • Group lessons – hourly – at riding school on school pony | \$ 60 |

Vet Bills: rough estimates ONLY

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| • Treating a mild colic | \$ 400 |
| • Treating a major colic including surgery | \$10,000 |
| • Treating minor wound, cold, lameness etc | \$ 250 |
| • Treating a major wound or illness | \$ 2,000 |

• Pre purchase Vet checks depending on thoroughness start from around \$ 300

You can insure your pony which will greatly help reduce these Veterinary expenses. Insurance is recommended to any pony owners. You can buy and maintain a pony cheaper than this, this often depends on many variable factors such as breed, health care needs, conformation, temperament and what facilities are available to you. Ponies are expensive to keep and time consuming to train hence why a good, safe and reliable pony is worth so much. It is highly recommended that a first pony is well trained and is experienced to give your child the safest and most fun introduction to the joys of pony ownership.

Often very cheap instructors and cheap dentists, cheap Farriers etc do not have the training and experience behind them to do a good job. As there is so much to know, it is too easy for something to go wrong or a mistake to be made by poorly trained or inexperienced 'professionals' in the horse industry. So please remember, often when paying the higher prices you are paying for your pony's well-being and therefore your child's safety and confidence.

In the horse industry, you get what you pay for.

Time

One of the biggest factors of pony ownership is the time involved. Many people are unaware of just how many hours are required to keep a pony happy and healthy. And of course the more ponies there are, the more time it takes!

Day to day care:

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| • Mucking out a stable | Approx 15min |
| • Making up a 2 feeds | Approx 15 min |
| • Feeding the pony (twice daily) | Approx 10 min |
| • Cleaning out and refilling water trough | Approx 10 min |
| • Filling a haynet or haybag | Approx 5 min |
| • Thoroughly grooming a pony | Approx 15 min |
| • Catching and bringing pony in from paddock
depending on distance of the paddock, longer if the pony decides not to be caught easily that day! | Approx 5 – 10 min |
| • Rugging or unrugging a pony | Approx 5 min |
| • Practicing training or ground work with your pony to ensure he keeps his good manners | Approx 5 – 10 min |



That is at least **an hour or more of work every single day** before you even get in the saddle!

Other time factors to consider:

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| • Visit from the vet | Anywhere from 20min to a couple of hours |
| • Visit from the Farrier | Anywhere from 20 min to 1 hour |
| • Visit from the Dentist | Anywhere from 45 min to 1 hour |
| • Treating a wound | Approx 20 – 30 minutes |
| • Cleaning saddle, bridle and equipment | Anywhere from 20min to an hour |
| • Preparing for a Show or Pony Club Rally | Approx 3 hours |

Riding can take any amount of time from 20 minutes to 2 hours, and if you're planning to compete or do Pony Club, or even go on long trail rides you will need to ride and train with your pony at least four times a week, many serious riders exercise their horses 6 days a week! Pony Club rallies and shows usually go all day with very early starts. Expect to get out of bed before dawn if you choose to give competition a try!

Holidays

Ponies need feeding and care **every single day of the year** no matter how ill you may be or how awful the weather is. If you want to go on a holiday or have some time off you will very likely need to pay for a professional to take care of your pony while you are away. Friends and family who are not familiar with ponies do not make suitable pony sitters as so much can go wrong without a solid foundation of knowledge to keep them and your pony safe.

Saving Time

You can save time by having your pony on Full Board agistment, where the owner of the property where the pony lives does most of the day to day work, but this is more expensive. You can save costs by having your pony on Part Board where you do more of the work and the 'rent' is cheaper.

Housing

To safely house your pony you need to ensure that the facilities are suitable, safe and provide the pony with its needs. If you are setting up your home paddock or are going to agist/board elsewhere these are the things you need to provide and look out for:

- Fencing needs to be well maintained, safe and secure. Ponies are often escape artists especially if they're lonely or on a diet. Help
- protect your pony from injury or losing your pony altogether by providing safe fencing.
- Water source needs to be available 24/7 and kept clean and fresh at all times. A dehydrated pony can get very sick, very fast.
- Shelter must be provided for ponies so they have shelter from the element throughout the seasons. You may choose to have a stable, paddock shelter or ensure there are plenty of trees and bushes in your paddock.
- Shelters must be kept well maintained and clean to avoid injuries on loose nails or tin, and to prevent damage to the pony's hooves which can be caused by standing around in manure and urine.
- Stables need to be well ventilated.
- Paddocks need to be kept clear of rubbish and excess manure as a greedy pony could easily swallow rubbish which would make it very ill or re-infect itself with worms if there is too much manure around.
- Hazards such as boggy ground, animal burrows, pits, loose wire and uncovered star-pickets need to be removed or fenced off to prevent serious injury to your pony.



Choosing The Right Pony



So you've decided to take the plunge and buy a pony. Just some key things to consider when choosing your pony include:

- How tall do you want your pony to be? It can often shatter self esteem if a pony is too big for a child, especially if the child finds a taller pony difficult to ride and handle with confidence. Consider an appropriate height for your child's current needs.
- How old do you want the pony to be? For a first or second pony – especially if the parents are also new to horses a young pony (a young pony is under 10 years of age) is not a good idea. The best choice is an older pony, one that is experienced and well trained. Ponies can live and be ridden well into their late twenties and early thirties so do not be afraid to look at older, wiser ponies.
- How experienced are you? If you are only into your first five years or so of pony ownership it would be best to find a pony that is suitable for beginners, has done a lot of trail riding, Pony Club and shows, a pony that is reliable and calm so that your child and yourself can learn from the pony and not have to worry about bad habits or frightening reactions that you may not be prepared for.
- Does the pony pass a Vet Check? Always pay for an independent Vet Check so you do not get any nasty surprises with the pony's health down the track. If any seller refuses to allow a Vet Check walk away, as there is no legitimate reason to refuse.
- What is the pony's medical history? Does it have any special dietary or maintenance needs that need to be considered?
- How does the pony behave away from home? Ask the seller if you may take the pony to a rally or lesson off the property so you can see how it behaves in an unfamiliar environment.
- Do you and your child feel that they can 'click with' and form a bond with the pony?
- Have you taken a third party to see the pony (as they can give an opinion not based on falling in love with the pony!) and do they feel as though this pony will be a good match for your child? Instructors are usually the best people to ask outside opinions from as they know your child's (and your) capabilities best.

Because My Daughter Grew Up With Horses

By Tracy Meisenbach

My daughter turned sixteen years old today; which is a milestone for most people. Besides looking at baby photos and childhood with her, I took time to reflect on the young woman my daughter had become and the choices she would face in the future. As I looked at her I could see the athlete she was, and determined woman she would soon be.

I started thinking about some the girls we knew in our town who were already pregnant, pierced in several places, hair every color under the sun, drop outs, drug addicts and on the fast track to no w here, seeking surface identities because they had no inner self esteem. The parents of these same girls have asked me why I "waste" money on horses so my daughter can ride. I'm told she will grow out it, lose interest, discover boys, and all kinds of things that try to pin the current generation's "slacker" label on my child. I don't think it will happen, I think she will love and have horses all her life.

Because my daughter grew up with horses she has compassion. She knows that we must take special care of the very young and the very old. We must make sure those without voices to speak of their pain are still cared for.

Because my daughter grew up with horses she learned responsibility for others than herself. She learned that regardless of the weather you must still care for those you have the stewardship of. There are no "days off" just because you don't feel like being a horse owner that day. She learned that for every hour of fun you have there are days of hard slogging work you must do first.

Because my daughter grew up with horses she learned not to be afraid of getting dirty and that appearances don't matter to most of the breathing things in the world we live in. Horses do not care about designer clothes, jewelry, pretty hairdos or anything else we put on our bodies to try to impress others. What a horse cares about are your abilities to work within his natural world, he doesn't care if wearing \$80.00 jeans while you do it.

Because my daughter grew up with horses she learned about sex and how it can both enrich and complicate lives. She learned that it only takes one time to produce a baby, and the only way to ensure babies aren't produced is not to breed. She learned how babies are planned, made, born and, sadly, sometimes die before reaching their potential. She learned how sleepless nights and trying to outsmart a crafty old broodmare could result in getting to see, as non-horse people rarely do, the birth of a true miracle.

Because my daughter grew up with horses she understands the value of money. Every dollar can be translated into bales of hay, bags of feed or farrier visits. Purchasing non-necessities during lean times can mean the difference between feed and good care, or neglect and starvation. She has learned to judge the level of her care against care she sees provided by others and to make sure her standards never lower, and only increase as her knowledge grows.

Because my daughter grew up with horses she has learned to learn on her own. She has had teachers that cannot speak, nor write, nor communicate beyond body language and reactions. She has had to learn "read" her surroundings for both safe and unsafe objects, to look for hazards where others might only see a pretty meadow. She has learned to judge people as she judges horses. She looks beyond appearances and trappings to see what is within.

Because my daughter grew up with horses she has learned sportsmanship to a high degree. Everyone that competes fairly is a winner. Trophies and ribbons may prove someone a winner, but they do not prove someone is a horseman. She has also learned that some will do anything to win, regardless of who it hurts. She knows that those who will cheat in the show ring will also cheat in every other aspect of their life and are not to be trusted.

Because my daughter grew up with horses she has self-esteem and an engaging personality. She can talk to anyone she meets with confidence, because she has to express herself to her horse with more than words. She knows the satisfaction of controlling and teaching a 1000 pound animal that will yield willingly to her gentle touch and ignore the more forceful and inept handling of those stronger than she is. She holds herself with poise and professionalism in the company of those far older than herself.

Because my daughter grew up with horses she has learned to plan ahead. She knows that choices made today can effect what happens five years down the road. She knows that you cannot care for and protect you investments without savings to fall back on. She knows the value of land and buildings. And that caring for your vehicle can mea n the difference between easy travel or being stranded on the side of the road with a four horse trailer on a hot day.

When I look at what she has learned and what it will help her become, I can honestly say that I haven't "wasted" a penny on providing her with horses. I only wish that all children had the same opportunities to learn these lessons from horses before setting out on the road to adulthood.