

Online Auction Sites can be Boon, Bust for Horsey Stuff

Considering an online purchase? Follow these tips to ensure a positive experience.

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Whether you're idly window shopping on the internet or actually bargain hunting for a must-have item, online auction sites have a tendency to grab your attention. You can find great deals on everything from vintage equestrian memorabilia to horsey home décor, jewelry, tack and show apparel. However, you can also get ripped off. Most often buyer's remorse isn't the fault of the auction site, but rather the dishonesty of the seller. Or, maybe you didn't try hard enough to uncover the important minor details about the item. Both can lead to some shock and disappointment when the item arrives and you discover that your lucky treasure turns out to be something you can't use at all.

Bidding on an item at an online auction site is a gamble, but there are ways to hedge your bet. For example when bidding on tack, steer clear of generalized claims. Simply describing a bridle as "show quality" leaves much to the imagination. Exactly what level of show is the seller referring to? What's appropriate for a schooling show isn't going to work for an A-circuit medal class. One way to alleviate some of the guesswork is to stick to tack that is made by a reputable manufacturer. Then make certain the company's brand name or logo, which should be stamped somewhere on the item, is supported by photographs from the seller. Another tactic is to study the seller's feedback score. If they have plenty of accolades from past buyers, that's a good sign. Even better is a seller who's willing to pony up their home phone number for consultations on big ticket items like saddles. Finally, keep in mind the old adage that if something's too good to be true, it probably is. Always weigh the risks of buying via an auction site versus traveling to your local tack store and buying what's right there in front of you.