

## Horse Shopping Tips in a Buyer's Market

**With an economic decline, there are some new rules to horse buying.**

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The horse world is not immune from America's current economic woes. Because of soaring gasoline prices the cost of cultivating and transporting feed has skyrocketed. There are record foreclosures on homes, and longtime employees are being laid off. This sad state of affairs is forcing some horse owners to choose between keeping their horse and keeping their house. If you're shopping for a horse there are plenty available, and many are being offered for sale at very affordable prices. But how can you make the most of the market?

First, keep in mind that many sellers do not want to sell their horses. They're being forced to make a painful decision. If you can truly provide a good home with optimal care, bring that to the seller's attention. That might give you a bit of an "in" with a seller who prefers that their horse went to the most suitable buyer, not simply the buyer with the biggest budget.

Next, don't neglect auctions. Typically they are not for novice riders or first-time horse owners, but in a depressed market auctions become a last resort for sellers who don't have the money to pay for another month's board. With a glut of horses on the market many useful, sound riding horses get overlooked and the auction is where they get dumped. Be wary and take along a knowledgeable friend. The two of you might discover a bargain.

Finally, don't be shy about calling on horses that are a little out of your price range. In a competitive market sellers have to be realistic about the true worth of their horse. If you fall in love with a horse that's just a bit too expensive for your budget, you can politely leave your name and contact information and let the seller know that if they are forced to lower their price you'd be interested. Just make sure you never come across as insulting or condescending, in effect scolding the seller for asking such a high price for their horse. In time, reality will set in. With today's tough market, sellers must often make compromises. And that can work to your advantage.