

What you need to know to be in the Horse project



Horses are a great livestock project to be involved with, it can be very rewarding but also labor intensive and can be expensive. This livestock projects can be done all year long but is often the busiest during the summer and around fair season. Horses require daily care and attention by the exhibitor, as do all livestock projects. This project can get expensive due to the ongoing care that horses require but it can be well worth it for the skills and knowledge that a 4-Her can gain through this project

Cost of owning and working with a horse:

- **Purchasing a horse:**

The price of a horse varies depending on the age and training level of the horse, but many good horses can be bought for \$5,000 or less. When looking to buy a horse it is always important to look for a horse that is safe for your skill level and can help you reach your goals in the future. Some things to consider are training level, age, confirmation, discipline, and temperament. An alternative option to purchasing a horse would be to lease a horse for your project. Leasing involves an agreement with the owner where the owner retains ownership, but you can work with the horse. Leasing is a great option if you cannot afford the upfront cost of the horse or you want to dip your toe in before jumping all the way in.

- **Equipment and Supplies needed:**

Halter, lead rope, saddle, saddle pad, girth, bridle, longe line, grooming supplies, fly spray, protective leg boots, and food bins are all essential equipment you will need for your horse project and should last for many years if properly taken care of. The type of tack used may vary depending on the discipline you chose to be involved in. A saddle and bridle that fit properly are regardless of discipline.

- **Facilities needed:**

Horses need a secure stall or paddock. Stalls should be at least 10'x10' and paddock areas are typically larger. You should provide appropriate bedding such as shavings or straw, daily removal of animal waste is a necessity. For outdoor enclosures you should provide adequate shelter for your horse like a three-sided shed that allows your horse to escape the elements. An additional exercise area would be ideal, so you can ride and train your horse as needed.

- **Animal Health:**

Like any animal, horses need routine vet care to stay healthy. Some general health items to think about and discuss with your vet include: vaccinations, parasite control, and teeth floating. In Colorado some important vaccinations to have are EEE, Rabies, WEE, Tetanus, and West Nile. Depending on the time of year and parasite load, different types of dewormer may be needed. Proper hoof care is also key to keeping your horse healthy and performing at their best. You should discuss with your farrier what type of shoeing or trimming program is best for your horse's needs. Many horses will do well on a 6 to 10 week trimming program.

- **Feeding:**

It is important to feed high quality roughage that is free of mold and dust. Horses should consume 1.5-2.5% of their body weight daily in forage. Common forages to feed your horse include: grass hay, alfalfa, and an alfalfa-grass hay mix. The roughage you choose needs to have 8-10% protein and adequate levels of vitamins and minerals. Some horses may also need a grain ration because they have higher caloric needs because they are heavy performance horses, growing, lactating, or just not an "easy keeper". It is important to choose a commercial grain that is high quality and right for your specific horse's needs. Your horse should always be given roughage even when on a grain ration. Clean, fresh water needs to be given at all times, water is the most important nutrient for your horse. A horse will drink 5 to 10 gallons of water a day.

- **Local Feed Dealers:**

- Agfinity Feed; Eaton, Greeley, Brighton
- Ault Feed Mill, Ault
- Country Corner Feed & Tack, Greeley
- Murdock's Ranch & Home Supply, Greeley
- Tractor Supply Company, Greeley
- Northern Colorado Feeders Supply, Ft. Collins
- Ranchway Feeds, Ft. Collins
- JAX Ranch & Farm, Ft. Collins

Important Note: Make certain you have a veterinary-client relationship so that medicated feeds can be used, consult your veterinarian if you are unsure.

- **Daily Care:**

- Training and exercise – type will depend on discipline and skill level but is important for all horses
- Grooming: daily grooming helps keep your healthy and builds trust with your horse

- **Level Advancement Program**

This program is a teaching guide to help members in the horse project learn about horsemanship and basic horse care. This program involves a written and riding test for each level. To show at County Fair a member must pass Level I and passing Level II is also highly encouraged.

- **Horse Project Levels**

- Level I – required for competing at Weld County fair
- Level II – required to compete at Colorado State Fair
- Level III
- Level IV – required if the project member wishes to compete in any over fences class