



Practical Guide for International Buyers

How to Evaluate a Sport Horse Before Purchase

Pre-checklist before contacting a veterinarian

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SportHorses.vet

1. Define the Sporting Objective

- Discipline (Jumping / Dressage / Amateur or Professional use)
- Current level of the horse
- Expected medium- and long-term level
- Competition frequency
- Performance versus long-term durability

A horse may be suitable for one objective and not for another.

2. General Observation at Rest

- General attitude (alert, calm, reactive)
- Body condition (underweight / adequate / overweight)
- Overall symmetry
- Standing posture
- Visible limb alignment
- Presence of surgical scars

3. Basic Handling and Behavior

- Walking from stall to aisle
- Response to handling
- Eating behavior and comfort
- Saddling behavior
- Reaction to tack placement

4. Movement Evaluation Without Rider

- Walk: regular, symmetrical, relaxed
- Trot in straight line: rhythm, symmetry, fluency
- Breathing at rest and after trot
- Signs of stiffness, irregularity or asymmetry

5. Movement Evaluation With Rider

- Walk, trot and canter under saddle
- Transitions
- Response to work
- Overall comfort of movement

6. Discipline-Specific Evaluation

Jumping horses: jumping test, technique, back use, consistency, behavior pre/post effort

Dressage horses: quality of gaits, elasticity, regularity, ability to collect

7. Hooves, Shoeing and Limbs

- Hoof quality
- Limb symmetry
- Type of shoeing
- Uneven wear
- Visible tendon or joint discomfort

8. Respiratory System

- Resting respiratory rate
- Recovery after exercise
- Abnormal respiratory noises
- Coughing or nasal discharge

9. Vision and Basic Neurology

- Visual response
- Coordinated movements
- Safety during turns and direction changes

10. Medical and Sporting History

- Previous surgeries (which and when)
- Prior orthopedic injuries
- Current training status
- Training consistency (last 6–12 months)
- Current or recent medication

11. Diagnostic Imaging Before the Vet Check

- Request previous radiographs if available
- Request previous ultrasounds if available
- Have images reviewed by an experienced orthopedic veterinarian

This may save time, money and incorrect decisions.

12. Important Warning

- No observation replaces an independent veterinary examination
- Basic evaluations do not assess long-term orthopedic risk, performance impact or athletic durability

Conclusion

This checklist helps identify early warning signs, ask better questions and prepare for a professional pre-purchase examination focused on performance and long-term risk.

The logical next step is an independent veterinary evaluation.

Independent Veterinary Assessment for Sport Horse Purchases

When acquiring a sport horse in Europe, an independent, performance-oriented veterinary evaluation represents a key element in the decision-making process. SportHorses.vet provides rigorous and objective orthopedic assessments, grounded in scientific evidence, with a specific focus on athletic performance, structural soundness, and medium- to long-term athletic durability.

If you require an expert and objective evaluation prior to making a purchase decision, you may contact **SportHorses.vet** for an independent veterinary assessment.

Ready to schedule a Pre-Purchase Examination?

Contact our equine veterinary team directly via WhatsApp

👉 www.sporthorses.vet

👉 [WhatsApp Consultation Available](#)