

## IS THIS HORSE SUITABLE FOR MY CHILD?

I have frequently heard parents say, "I would like to buy a young horse for my child so that they can grow up together."

I am sure there are young horses with exceptional temperaments that would be fine with young children. In my opinion, though, your child will have more fun learning to ride if you buy an older educated horse that is what I call well broke. A young horse is like a young child; they need guidance quickly learning undesirable behaviour and desirable behaviour. If your child is highly experienced, they may know how to educate a young green horse.

My ideal choice is an aged gelding that has been there and done that, he does not have to come from a previous child handler, but he does have to be, as I said before, well broke. I have seen many aged competition horses teach young children in their retirement; if they are well cared for into their senior years, they can provide many years of joy and be loved by the whole family.

What do I mean by well broke, one that will stand quietly while being caught, haltered, saddled, bridled. Polite ground manners, handle feet easily, tie-up, lead etc. and easy for the child to ride in all three ridden gaits, stop and guide willingly. How much can you expect to pay A LOT, it takes many years to train a horse to have a solid foundation, and a good child's horse is worth his weight in gold. If your child is horse crazy, then seek a well-qualified instructor to give your child riding lessons before shelling out big bucks on buying a horse, only to find a few months down the track the child loses interest. Spend as much time as you can before you own a horse, learning how to handle and care for one. A good riding instructor should also help you out in sourcing a suitable horse for your child.

I took this photo nearly six years ago of a young lady, Tori, learning to ride on my then rising 20-year-old Quarter Horse Gelding Moonlight Magnolia (Bud). Tori had finished her lesson one afternoon and led Bud back to the tack room, she carefully removed his bridle while still saddled, forgetting to put the halter around his neck, but he knew she had forgotten this and stood there. At the same time, she went and put his bridle back in the tack room, only to find him still standing there when she returned. He knows Tori is only learning and does not look for opportunities to take advantage of this. He knows she may not give him the correct riding signals all the time, but you see him trying to please her and guess what she wants him to do. Yes, he is worth his weight in gold as my golden boy, I had hoped he would tenderly carry my Grand Babies one day, but a degenerative heart condition has now put him in the retiree lifestyle, so no more riding, just loving.