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PHHWV is a non-profit, charitable organisation committed to providing hope for equines through education, rehabilitation and advocacy.

## *REHOMING YOUR HORSE RESPONSIBLY*

*Our goal here is to propose suggestions you may not have considered.*

### Private sale

If your horse is fit and healthy this may be the most suitable option. You need to be comfortable with the new owner that you choose.

Most buyers are looking for a straightforward, healthy horse. If you are wanting to rehome a horse which is elderly, and/or has behavioural issues, frequent health or lameness issues they are at higher risk of neglect or being moved on again.

Selling a horse is no easy task but here are some **handy tips** to ensure your horse has a safe future (imagine you are the purchaser and advertise as honestly as you would hope a seller would to you!):

- Tell the truth. Mention every problem you feel the horse might have. Word adverts carefully.
- Avoid phrases such as “free to a good home” or “reduced for quick sale” as this is unlikely to attract buyers who have the horse’s best interests at heart.
- Ask your riding instructor or Pony Club for assistance/advice.
- Sell as a “project horse” (a lower price tag with behavioural issues or untrained) or “companion horse” (unrideable).  
Be aware that there is risk for the “project horse” – Horses can end up in the hands of someone who has possibly purchased them to do a little work then quickly re-sell for a profit. They may have little or no regard for the horse’s welfare. The more effort you invest in making sure that the person you sell your horse to has the horse’s best interests at heart, the more likely the horse is going to have a secure and stable future.  
Double check that the “companion horse” is sold to someone who will not ride them, particularly if they are retired due to health and/or age related issues.
- Use a reputable trainer to prepare the horse for sale, get him/her fit and provide further training. Some may advertise and sell for you on a commission basis, but you will have little or no control over who purchases. At least an expert might be able to re-home the prepared horse to a suitable new owner.

- Send horse for basic re-training (approximately \$400-\$500 pr week) then sell him/her yourself.
- When you have potential buyers:
  - Find out the person's level of horse knowledge and consider if this is a suitable match for your horse.
  - Make sure the person visits your horse in their current location and spends time doing the things they will need to do in the new home. For example, picking feet up, checking teeth, catching and haltering etc. Sometimes the seller (you) can have difficulty with the new owner once the sale has gone through because the horse does not behave the same at their new home.
  - If it is to be a riding horse, try to make it possible for the prospective buyer to ride the horse in a number of situations/environments.
  - It is often best if you or someone you trust knows the buyer however when this is not possible, an idea is to ask for a reference from their vet, riding instructor etc.
  - Visiting the property your horse is going to be homed can be reassuring.
  - Possibly consider allowing a trial period prior to selling – this can work for buyer and seller, but is still risky. It is advisable to have a signed agreement. Be aware that the risk of accident is increased when a horse is in a new environment so you must be prepared for this. Possibly ask the prospective purchaser to insure the horse during the trial period.

### Cost-saving tips so you can keep your horse

We can often be shocked when we actually record the cost of owning a horse. But it is possible to reduce your expenses without affecting your horse's health and welfare. Write a budget for your horse ownership and perhaps for your life in general.

Financial counsellors are available through Kildonian Uniting CARE, Anglicare or Vincentcare and can help guide you with financial management. National Debt Helpline at [ndh.org.au](http://ndh.org.au) or by calling 1800 007 007. This hub can connect you with one of thousands of free counselors.

#### **Seven ways to save money:**

1. **Agistment:** If your horse is at an agistment property there is often a public paddock for your horse to enjoy being in a herd and is cheaper than a private (individual) paddock. Check out other agistment properties close enough for you to easily travel to your horse and compare prices.
2. **Horse gear:** Buy used gear or talk to your horse friends about the gear you need, so many have unused that they will be happy to sell reasonably.
3. **Feed:** Find other horse owners and look at buying bulk feed. See if you can store hay and buy when it is in plentiful supply as it is often cheaper. Investigate expert information about feeding horses to ensure you are not providing unnecessary feed. Large hay rolls are cheaper than bales.

Important fact: The staple diet of a horse is grass hay (roughage) at the ratio of 2 % of their body weight per day.

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/horses/health-and-welfare/feed-requirements-of-horses>

4. **Spend less on riding lessons.** Take group lessons or extend the weeks between lessons.
5. **Rugs:** You may well be spending unnecessary money. If your horse has adequate shelter, they may not need a rug or more than a single canvas rug.  
<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/do-i-need-to-rug-my-horse/>
6. **Vet and dental appointments:** If you can coordinate a group for vet/equine dentist visits this can lower costs.
7. **Farrier:** Compare the cost to having your horse shod or going barefoot. Also, there are short courses to learn how to care for your horses' hooves that can save costs.

### Free lease or half-lease

This can work well if it is carefully organised with a good written agreement in place. Leasing is essentially renting your horse to another person. People will often take a free lease, so that they can ride and care for the horse whilst paying for costs, but without taking on ownership. Half lease will mean both you and the lessee pay half the costs for caring for the horse. It is important to have discussed and complete a written and signed agreement regarding any veterinary costs that may occur due to illness, injury or pre-existing conditions. This can be a pathway to a new permanent home.

Things to consider when leasing your horse:

- Clearly define what you're looking for in a lessee and what your horse has to offer. Make an honest assessment of your horse's level of training and skills to decide what type of rider would be best suited for him/her. Is he beginner safe, or does he require a more advanced rider? Is he suitable for competition, and at what level? Do you want a rider who will be taking lessons and keeping your horse in training? Or it is more important that he just get regular attention and care?
- Spread the word that your horse is available for lease. If you're lucky, you may find a great lessee by just networking with your friends. You can also try posting signs at the local tack shop or feed store.
- Get everything in writing. Whether the lessee you chose is someone you know or someone you've just gotten to know, you will be wise to specify the terms of the lease in writing and have everyone sign the agreement. There are plenty of sample lease agreement available online if you search, but be sure the agreement you use covers everything necessary to prevent potential disputes or disagreements. Items to consider include the length of the lease, conditions for early termination, standards of care, stipulations on the use of the horse, insurance requirements, and terms for extending the lease.
- Out of sight should not equal out of mind. Just because your horse is being leased does not mean that you are no longer responsible. If an accident occurs, such as you horse getting onto the road and causing a collision, you may still be responsible as the owner.

Some tips are to:

- Look for a local home so you can visit your horse
- Put a written loan agreement in place
- Ensure you have a second plan should the lease fail

### [Thoroughbreds retired from racing](#)

Racing Victoria's Off The Track Program offers rehoming assistance for Victorian thoroughbreds: from the RV Acknowledged Retainer Network, to RESET Program, to the Full Circle Program, please visit [www.ottcommunity.com.au](http://www.ottcommunity.com.au) to learn more about how Racing Victoria's post racing programs may be able to assist.

### [Standardbreds retired from racing](#)

Harness Racing Victoria is committed to supporting standardbreds on and off the track, their industry retirement program known as the Hero program has a dedicated network of retrainers who specialise in retraining and rehoming harness ex-racehorses (standardbreds). Please visit [www.hrvhero.com.au](http://www.hrvhero.com.au) for more information.

### [Retirement Agistment Home](#)

This option is becoming more popular and there may be something available near you. An agistment property that provides paddocks, supervision and services, especially to care for retired horses.

### ["Free to good home"](#)

Only ever to someone you know and trust as people can simply take your horse then try to make money from them. Be very wary of people who on-sell horses or keep more horses than they can adequately care for.

### [Euthanasia "a good death"](#)

If you are no longer able to provide a good level of care then having your horse euthanised by an expert may be the responsible decision. Don't let your horse deteriorate further to suffer, then maybe die in the paddock after being unable to get up. Also, it can be very distressing for an older horse to move to a new property or unreasonable to expect another person to pay the increased, on-going costs of an aged or unwell horse. For example, the cost of keeping an aged Thoroughbred for one year is estimated to be \$8,000 per year - just in feed and the average lifespan of a horse is 30 years.

**The most humane approach is to have the horse euthanised in their home environment.**

See "The Farewell Booklet" for more details.

### [Donate your horse](#)

Organisations that provide horse therapy and riding for the disabled are two situations that could be considered. It would be important to check out the organisation carefully first. Your horse would need to have the right features for the type of work to be carried out.

**Poor choices:**

- Don't make any rushed or hurried decision about your horse's future.
- Auction at saleyard or take direct to knackery. Many horses sold at saleyards do not go to a nice new home. A large number of horses killed in abattoirs and knackeries may suffer extreme fear and pain prior to death. Horses suffer during transport to and from saleyards and slaughterhouses.
- "Free to good home" to someone you don't know.
- Expect equine welfare charities/rescue groups to take your horse and accept responsibility for re-homing or paying for the horse's care.
- Send off to a farmer's property that is away from your home where you are unable to provide care, and where the horse will be relatively unsupervised out in a big paddock with cows, etc. Also, horses are herd animals and need company.

**Disclaimer:**

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