



Owning an Off The Track Horse

Thinking of purchasing an OTT Horse?

Be prepared:

Every horse is different. Some adapt quickly and easily while others need time to get comfortable and adjust. Be patient with your horse.

Be calm but confident at all times. Your horse will pick up on your body language and disposition.

Get professional advice:

- Diet, especially over the transition period from racing to leisure horse, is extremely important so seek help from a professional about your horse's individual dietary requirements.
- Vet to assess general health and provide advice on worming and vaccinations and any stomach ulcer management program.
- Equine dental technician or equine veterinarian to check your horse's teeth – horses' teeth need at least once yearly check-ups and rasping.
- Farrier to check shoeing – all hooves need regular trimming (at least every six weeks) with some horses also requiring shoes (fronts +/- backs) to be fitted.
- Equine physiotherapist, osteopath or chiropractor for body alignment and movement checks.
- Saddle fitter to ensure first saddle is correctly fitted, and re-check within six months as your horse's physique can change.

Investigate the horse:

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- Get to know the horse's history, racing career, and identification (microchip number and racing name). Ask for the status of the horse to be changed to 'Retired from racing' by the trainer, and have its ownership transferred into your name.
- Ask if the horse has developed any vices such as crib-biting, wind-sucking, weaving, box walking. You need not reject a horse with vices, but just decide what you can live with.
- Arrange for a vet to assess the horse, to identify issues and understand its physical capabilities.

Understand transition from racing life:

A recently raced horse has been:

- Fed a specialist racing diet, exercised regularly and accustomed to a racing stable routine. They will take some time to acclimatise to a new lifestyle and environments.
- Most likely been trucked to and from race meetings, and may not have experience of being in a float or being tied to the side of a float or truck, so may require float training to achieve confidence and comfort.
- Mounted by a jockey whilst the horse is moving. Your horse may not stand still for you to mount and require training to 'park', as well as other commands such as stop, go, turn, back.
- Living as a high-level athlete. They will lose some muscle tone while letting down and spelling. They will change shape and will require attention to diet to sustain an optimum body weight.

Have realistic expectations:

- Unless you are an experienced rider, do seek advice from a retrainer or professional coach on the suitability of the horse for your riding ability and ambitions.

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- Generally, racehorses retired from the industry have had broad experience in being handled, led, shod, wormed and loaded onto transport, however, thoroughbreds can also be a little reactive and take a little while to adjust to a change in lifestyle.
- Owning an Off The Track horse is a unique and rewarding experience. However, it can at times be unpredictable and stressful. Horses take a huge time, emotional and financial commitment.
- Like any living being, they may incur physical injury or illness, or psychological trauma or stress. Please be patient and compassionate.
- Consider the whole-of-life of your horse, which may extend to the age of around 30 years or beyond.

The challenge of owning an Off The Track horse is well worthwhile! Enjoy the journey and do keep in touch with our Off The Track Tas community for further information and support.

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