

A Few Things to Assure a Successful OTTB Adoption

Do your homework in researching a reputable adoption program.

- Start with an internet search, or ask people you know what their experiences have been with different groups. Perhaps stick with non-profit organizations. They can do their own fundraising, and often receive veterinary care, supplies, etc. at a reduced rate, that benefit passed onto you in lower sale/adoption fees. Plus, in order for them to receive grant money, they must either be accredited (see below) or pass stringent tests as to how they care for their horses. As non-profits, their financial information is available to the public (try Goodsearch).
- If you have found a particular horse during your internet search in which you are interested, ask these questions, and as many more as will make you feel comfortable:
 1. Where did the horse initially come from (rescue, kill pen, auction, racetrack, private donor).
 2. What is your criteria for approving an adopter?
 3. Is there a contract that I need to sign, and can I resell the horse?
 3. Do you have a “return policy,” ie., if horse does not work out, or my situation changes, will you take him back?
 4. Do you maintain ownership of the horse or does my adoption equal formal ownership?
 5. What veterinary information can you supply with the horse?
 6. What has said horse been doing since you got him (rehab. turnout, regular riding, and what kind, ie. trail, outdoor ringwork, indoor arena.

OR: You can cut to the chase immediately and ask if the organization is TAA accredited. Information on the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance (TAA) can be found on their website at www.thoroughbredaftercare.org, and their list of criteria for accreditation **here**.

What to do when you get him home.

First of all, it is a fallacy to believe that a horse “needs to be a horse for awhile” once he leaves the track. What does that mean?!? He will always be a horse--just one with a different upbringing.

Many believe he will need at least 1 to 6 months of turn out and no work to be ready for a new job! Only the injured need time off, and even the stressed and nervous horses don't always need to be left alone during this get-to-know-you period. Rehabilitation from an injury can be anywhere from a mere two weeks turn out, to full blown stall rest, and re-evaluation after 30 days, including new xrays or ultrasounds. The latter type of adoption can turn out to bring you a true diamonds in the rough, if the adopter is knowledgeable in Thoroughbred rehab.

Have access to a veterinarian who is experienced with racehorses if you feel your own experience is lacking. Can't afford it? Then perhaps you should rethink adopting an OTTB. And remember, as with all types of horsemanship, your ego should be checked at the door. This is about doing what is best for the horse, and a true horseman or horsewoman can learn something everyday.

Don't let a potential adoptee's age or number of starts turn you away from your next show or pleasure mount. Check out <http://warhorsesottbs.org> to see why an oldie can be a real goody!*

* “Old” for a racehorse is the age when a pleasure horse is just warming up!