

# So You Think You Want a Horse? by Kayla Neill

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I have had the great privilege of owning horses since I was two years old and cannot imagine my life without them. Over the past 10 years as County Extension Agent for 4-H and Youth Development here in Parker County, it has come to my attention that some may have jumped the gun in getting a horse before they were ready. I've put together a basic list of things you need and things you should be prepared for.

**Fact: This past week (7 days) one of my horses has cost me upwards of \$900. In 1 week!! Part of this was due to routine care, the other, an emergency vet visit. On a completely different occasion 1 week (7 days), my horse cost me \$10,000 in medical expenses. So you think you want a horse?**

In no way is this article meant to be mean or scare you but it is meant to be real. A horse owner is responsible for caring for an animal that is completely dependent on its owner. Yes, they are beautiful majestic animals, but they are not meant for everyone.

Thing you MUST have and be able to provide:

1. Trailer - I can't tell you the number of people that get a horse before they get a trailer and this, in my opinion, is not responsible horse ownership. A horse owner should never have to depend on someone else to haul their animal. There will come a time that a horse will need to be hauled in for an emergency at midnight (I promise it will happen), and when that time comes (because it will), you will need a trailer. Vets cannot treat all emergencies on a call out. I'm not saying that you have to have \$120K rig, but you do need a way that you can **safely** transport your horse to places, that doesn't solely rely on other people hauling the horse. Stepping off my soap box now.
2. A place to keep it -
  - ⇒ Your horse will need at minimum a shelter where it can get out of the weather.
  - ⇒ Horses can quickly overgraze a piece of land and leave you with nothing but a dry lot and weeds. Proper pasture rotation should be practiced to help maintain grazing.
3. Routine Vet/Farrier Care -
  - ⇒ Yearly Vaccines - ~ \$150 - Includes office visit or farm call, vaccines (EWT, F/R, WNV and Rabies), and Coggins.
  - ⇒ 6 Month Boosters - ~ \$85 - Includes office visit or farm call, F/R and WNV Vaccines
  - ⇒ Yearly Teeth Float - ~ \$180
  - ⇒ Farrier - a horse MUST have their feet trimmed every 5-6 weeks. Depending on the quality of the horse's hooves, the terrain it's exposed to, as well as the horse's job determines whether or not the horse will need shoes. A hoof trim usually runs about \$40-\$50 per trim (\$450/year). If your horse requires shoes you're looking at \$130-\$150 (\$1,350/year).
  - ⇒ Worming - 4-6 times/year at \$12/tube (\$72/year).
4. Feed/Hay - Prices for feed and hay can vary drastically, but it is highly recommended that you provide a high quality, well balanced feed ration and hay to your horse. An average horse at maintenance will cost approximately \$160/month (\$1,920/year). Keep in mind this is an average horse at maintenance...if you are hauling to events every weekend and riding several times a week this would quickly increase.

Totals

- ⇒ An average horse that requires shoes will cost you \$3,745/year
- ⇒ An average horse that does not require shoes will cost you \$2,845/year

**This does not include your basic grooming supplies, shavings, emergency calls (and you can bet you'll have at least 3-4 a year) or insurance. My words of advice... if you can't afford to purchase a horse for \$3,000, then you cannot afford to provide quality care for one.**