

DARTMOOR PONY INFORMATION

Purchasing ponies from the commons of Dartmoor

Ponies on



Dartmoor



For many centuries ponies have lived, bred and run free on Dartmoor. Each year in the autumn the ponies are rounded up or drifted from the Moor. The foals are weaned and some are offered for sale. Should you purchase a pony from the commons you will have a pony of good temperament, the makings of a child's pony or driving pony or, perhaps above all, the best of family friends.

However, before purchasing a pony the following advice may be of help, as ponies are expensive animals to keep, particularly as ponies can live as long as 40 years! Moorland ponies are semi-feral and have rarely been handled; this makes them potentially unsuitable for those with little experience of horses. If you are inexperienced in purchasing ponies, it is advisable to take an expert with you for advice.

The first decision to be made when considering buying a pony are the costs involved; these are outlined below.

Item	Pony kept at grass (potential Annual Costs)
Grass keep	£450
Feed, hay, etc.	£100
Vet's fees (inc. teeth and vaccinations)	£80
Insurance	£170
Farrier	£240
Worming	£60
Total Annual Cost	£1100
	One-off costs
Passport (a requirement by December 2003)	£20-£40*
Training (when the pony is old enough)	£320 (minimum)
Tack/Equipment	£500
Total One-off costs	£840-£860 *

* cost will vary from region to region.

If you have your own facilities livery fees will not apply, but there will be field maintenance such as fertilising, rolling and topping that will need to be done. Also, you may not think your pony is worth insuring, but third party insurance is essential in case your pony is responsible for causing an accident.

Looking after your pony

Ponies kept at grass should be checked at least twice a day for health and any signs of injury. A sheltered area should be available, either man-made or natural, and the paddock should be a suitable size, depending on the quality of the grass. The grass supply should be restricted if it is too lush, especially in the spring, because ponies can become very ill from eating too much rich grass, especially if they are not used to it. It is good practice to 'rest' grassland by dividing up the field and rotating the grazing of each section. All fencing should be adequate and safe, especially since moorland ponies are particularly nimble and are likely to be unsettled initially. Clean water should always be available.

Remember, most ponies sold at markets are under one year old and will not be able to be ridden until they are about four years old. Until this time, regular handling will make it less wary of humans when it comes to be trained for riding. Training, known as breaking, requires experience, skill and specific equipment and should be carried out by an expert to be successful. Once broken, the pony will still be very inexperienced and is unlikely to be suitable for a child or novice rider for some time. A badly broken pony can be a danger to both rider and public and is very unlikely to have a secure and happy future.

If you follow the advice set out in this information sheet, and do decide to purchase a pony, you will have invested in a pony that should provide an ideal, and reliable companion for any child, and should prove to be excellent value for money as well.

There are some local based groups that can assist in the purchase of ponies kept on the commons of Dartmoor. For further information contact:
Dartmoor National Park Authority,
Parke, Bovey Tracey, Newton Abbot,
Devon TQ13 9JQ

Tel: (01626) 832093 Fax: (01626) 834684
e-mail: hq@dartmoor-mpa.gov.uk
website: www.dartmoor-mpa.gov.uk