

Loaning & Sharing

Sharing the Cost

The current financial climate has hit many horse owners and if the prospect of having to sell your horse is too much to bear then you could consider a loan or share agreement that will allow you to keep him but reduce the costs involved. Alternatively you may want to have a horse to ride but haven't the budget to buy one, in which case loaning or sharing can be an ideal solution.

Sharing

Horses and ponies can be shared part-time, where owner and sharer split the care and riding time, or full-time where the sharer loans the horse permanently for a period. The owner and sharer divide the responsibility of owning the horse and have agreed times when they will look after and ride the horse.

Each sharing arrangement is different and designed to suit the needs of the horse and owner. Sometimes the owner needs help towards the cost of keeping the horse, sometimes they want someone to help with the care and exercising. In these cases, the sharer usually does stable chores such as mucking out and rides the horse in return. Usually, the owner is still very much involved with their horse and it generally stays at the same yard.

The benefit of sharing is that it is not just you who has to bear the financial and physical burden of looking after a horse and keeping it exercised. However, you and your sharer ideally need to be of similar riding ability and have a similar style of riding, especially if you both intend to compete. If one of you is a more advanced rider or has different training methods then this can cause problems.

Loaning

Think carefully before entering into a permanent loan agreement, as your circumstances may change and there have been cases of horses being sold by the loaner without informing the owner. It may be better to set up an agreement that lasts for a set period, with the option of continuing for another fixed term. If you don't know the person who is loaning your horse then you should ask for references.

If you are taking a horse out on loan make sure that you try out the horse in exactly the same way as you would if you were buying it and if possible ask to have the horse on loan for a trial period. A good owner will be happy to agree as they should want to ensure you are the right person to care for their horse.

Even if you know the person who is going to loan or share your horse it is very important that you have a formal, legally binding agreement that covers every aspect of the horse's welfare and the shared costs and responsibilities. You will



need similar written contracts for both the share and loan agreements. Any document should ideally be checked over by a legal advisor before it is signed and witnessed, to ensure it is a legally binding agreement. Both parties should then keep a copy of the contract.

The British Horse Society website includes a sample loan agreement that provides a good guide to what should be included. Whether loaning or sharing there are a number of things that you need to consider, including:

- How long is the agreement for?
- Who will pay the costs?
- Who is responsible for insurance, vaccinations and vets fees?
- Where will the horse be kept?
- What access will the owner have to check on its welfare if the horse is stabled away from home?
- What happens if the horse becomes seriously ill or injured and has to be put down?
- Who will decide on the horse's training and competition programme?
- What activities can the horse be used for?
- Does the horse have any vices - eg bad in traffic, windsucking etc
- Can the horse be ridden by other people as well?
- Is tack and equipment provided with the horse?
- Can the agreement be terminated if the owner believes the horse isn't being correctly looked after?

If you are planning to share a horse you should also consider:

- How will the costs be divided and what is included?
- How often and when you will be able to ride the horse?
- Will there be flexibility if you need to change the days that you ride?
- If you both plan to compete, who has priority?
- If the horse is insured are you covered to ride him or will you need to take out rider only insurance?
- Who will look after the horse if you are ill or on holiday?

Top Tips

- Make sure that any loan or share agreement is covered by a legal contract, even if it involves a friend.
- If you plan to share a horse make sure that you agree over training methods and stable management, such as feeding etc.
- If you are loaning a horse, have it vetted before it leaves your yard, keep in regular touch with the loaner and include a clause that prevents them from selling the horse on without your permission.
- Make sure that there is adequate insurance in place to protect you in the event of an accident.

For more information on loan agreements and a sample contract visit the British Horse Society's website at www.bhs.org.uk