

JENNY DORAN of HorsePlay, one of Ireland's leading specialist horse sales websites, provides some handy tips for when buying and selling horses or other items on the Internet.

the cyber market



The Internet has changed how we do many things with our horses. By shopping for tack and rugs on line, we save time that can then be spent with our precious equine friends. We can also enter some events on line, saving on dreaded paperwork, and we're increasingly turning to the Internet to find secondhand trailers, horseboxes, saddles and even our perfect horsy partner!

The growth of the Internet and the rapid pace of technological innovation has dramatically increased our options when it comes to how, when and where we sell or buy anything equine, as well as making it so much cheaper to advertise. But the increased options, accessibility and coverage offered by the Internet do come with some risk and the old horse sales adage "let the buyer beware" stands firm today – both on line and off.

KER-CHING!

One of the main advantages of advertising on line is that it is generally so much cheaper than advertising in national equestrian papers, with many sites allowing sellers to place classified listings completely free of charge.

Any savings are good and allow you to spend your hard-earned cash on the important things in life – such as hay and horse feed! Free ads also provide you with the ideal opportunity to sell those items that might be cluttering up the corners of your tackroom, such as the leather riding boots you don't use any more, those jodhpurs that are now just a little bit too tight or the hacking jacket that hasn't seen daylight in the past twelve months.

THE POWER OF A PICTURE

"A picture speaks a thousand words" is a bit of a cliché now, but one that is still very true. Advertising on line allows images to be added quickly and easily and, if a prospective buyer can see a picture of your horse or pony, horsebox or trailer (or anything else for that matter), they're more likely to know whether it's the type they're looking for – saving buyers and sellers much time and hassle.

Research shows that response rates are much higher for ads with good-quality images and some sites, such as HorsePlay (www.horseplay.ie), allow you to add several images, so you can show your horse standing up in hand, and working on the flat and over fences, to give the best possible impression of what he has to offer.

ACTION REPLAY

As increased bandwidth gives many of us faster Internet connections, some sites now offer sellers the facility to upload videos of their horses in action – something that is a tremendously powerful Internet selling tool for horse owners.

SECURITY

A scam is a scheme designed to con you out of your cash and it's important to be alert for possible scammers when buying or selling anything, whether on line through the Internet or off line through the local paper. Common sense will go a long way towards protecting you, but it's important to be aware of some scam tactics that have been brought to the attention of the authorities.



You should always be extremely cautious when tempted to buy horses unseen and unvetted. It has been reported that unscrupulous dealers are posting false descriptions of horses and encouraging buyers to part with their money with the promise of a guarantee that the horse will suit. Yet, when the horse arrives, it bears little resemblance to the online description and it can be extremely difficult for the buyer to achieve any recompense. Any equine purchase should always be viewed and vetted, for the good of the horse and your pocket.

Equally, sellers should be cautious if approached with an offer that looks in any way suspicious. Reports reveal that some sellers have received rather dubious offers from "buyers". The buyers – almost always based overseas – promise to send a cheque that more than covers the cost of the horse or other item, plus shipping, before asking the vendor to transfer the excess amount back to their "agent". The cheques (if they arrive) bounce.

A few simple rules will help to keep you from becoming a victim of such scams. Be wary if:

- The buyer is overseas, wishing to buy sight unseen.
- The English in the email is poor.
- The buyer proposes to send you more than the cost of purchase and shipping. It's better to insist on exact payment only and request a phone number and address. Under no circumstances part with your horse or any goods you are selling until payment has cleared.

It's important to remember that it is only a small minority of people preying on horse buyers or sellers. It's essential to use your common sense. The Internet is a fantastic resource for buying and selling anything equine but, remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!



In addition to free ads for horses and ponies, horseboxes, trailers, new and used tack, and livery yards, HorsePlay features a calendar of Irish events and competitions, from dressage, eventing, show jumping and endurance riding to local shows.

websites

Going ON LINE really ADS up!

Websites are increasingly used by those looking to buy or sell horses and other equestrian equipment – and many offer free advertisements. Here is a selection...

ALLHORSE.IE

www.allhorse.ie/
This Irish website advertises all things equestrian, including horses, feed, stables, yards and equestrian centres, and features an events calendar. It raises funds for charities that help horses and donkeys in need, such as Dublin SPCA, Irish Horse Welfare Trust, Irish SPCA and the Donkey Sanctuary.

EQUESTRIANNEEDS.COM

www.equestrianeeds.com/
Advertisements for horses, horseboxes, tack and other equestrian equipment, from the UK and Ireland, are featured on the Equestrian Needs website – they can include photos and can be paid for in sterling or euros. There is free advertising for charities with horses in need of re-homing or those that have been the victim of horse theft.

EQUINE WORLD

www.equineworld.ie/
Just launched, Equine World is Ireland's newest equestrian website, featuring horses for sale and purchase in Ireland. New and used tack, trailers and livery yards are also advertised, and there is a useful Wanted page. Up to three photographs can be uploaded.

HORSEABOUT

www.horseabout.com
This Northern Ireland-based website for selling horses, ponies and all things equine is five years old. "We have a hit rate of almost 40,000 a month," says owner Robert McCoubrey. "When you log on, you have instant access to the most recent horses placed for sale. I operate a system whereby ads are randomly selected to reappear in a permanent cycle so they don't disappear from prominence after a few days. I've held the price at £5 for each ad, which will then stay live for three months." Advertisers are allowed unlimited text and can upload five photographs – a facility for video clips will be coming soon.

HORSESMART

www.horsemart.co.uk/
Horses, horseboxes, equestrian property, equipment and services are listed on Horsemart, which also allows you to upload photographs. Established in 1998, the site claims to have more than 12 million hits a month.

HORSES.IE

www.horses.ie/
This Irish online magazine includes free ads for everything equine, including holidays at riding centres, as well as a forum.

HORSE TRADER

www.horsetraderonline.co.uk/
This UK website claims to have attracted 628,476 visitors last year. It accepts advertisements from private individuals and businesses for all things equine, including horses, ponies, horseboxes, stables and properties. Advertisers can pay on the phone or on line.

PET MOVEMENT

www.petmovement.com/
An Irish online pet directory, Pet Movement features advertisements for horses and family pets, from dogs and cats to rabbits, birds and fish. You can also upload photographs.

TAILS

www.tails.ie/
This is another site that features ads not just for horses, but for other animals – both pets and cattle. You can upload photographs, too.

WORLD OF HORSES

www.worldofhorses.co.uk/
Packed with features, news, events and advice for riders of all ages and abilities, World of Horses also has advertisements for horses and ponies in the United Kingdom and United States – both for sale and loan. In addition, the site lists riding schools, stables, livery yards and breed centres across Britain and Ireland.

