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## Gift Horse: It's Not the Cost of the Holiday Pony That Holds Value for Your Child

By Armand Leone

If you're a parent considering getting your child a horse or pony for Christmas, I have some advice for you. I've been there and done that, and while it can be a hugely rewarding process for everyone involved, you must go into it with your eyes wide open.

It's vital to keep front and center of your mind the fact that you're not buying a horse to win or buying that horse as a financial investment — it rarely pans out that way — you are buying a *relationship*. What you are buying is happiness! The friendship and relationship that your child will hopefully develop with that horse or pony will benefit them, regardless of the competitive trajectory they may be on.



*"Putting a horse under the Christmas tree could be the best thing you ever do for your child. Just make sure you seek professional advice when choosing, stay within your budget, and always remember to enjoy the journey, wherever it takes you." — Armand Leone*

Success with the horse occurs in stages, with the first being to develop the ability to relate to and ride the new horse. So, choose one that is suitable for both your child and your budget. Enlist the help of a trusted or recommended professional who can advise on what type of horse would be a good fit for your family. The buying process can be tricky to navigate, so make sure you have someone on your side who is well-versed in sourcing horses and familiar with all parts of the purchase process.

It's not about winning a class or achieving any level of riding in the beginning. It starts with the child making a commitment to develop a relationship with a horse. There will be good and bad days.

Like a parent with their children, the relationship between a child and a horse requires the child to be kind but not a pushover, to set boundaries for acceptable conduct without being oppressive, and to nurture the horse as it develops. Problems that arise along the way help to build resilience, patience, and an understanding of how to work through them. We all need to learn these skills to thrive in this world.

[Read the Full Article on Chronicle of The Horse](#)

## Podcast Episode: The Upsides and Downsides of Riding Safety Vests

Armand sits down with host Piper Klemm of The Plaid Horse Magazine on their podcast, The Plaidcast, to discuss equestrian safety, most notably the advantages and drawbacks of both traditional body protectors and more modern inflatable air vests.



*Riders need to weigh the pros and cons of using a body protector or an air vest depending on the situation.*

"Along the way, I've had my share of falls, but I come at this from two perspectives," he explains. "My legal work on the personal injury side, which involves safety and risk management, as well as my personal experience.

"30 years ago, when I started riding seriously, they didn't really exist. I started looking into what would make sense for me, and I come at it from the perspective of what I've found useful, what I've found difficult, and where it might make the sport safer without making it unduly restrictive."

Armand talks about why he believes back protectors and air vests should not be made mandatory in competition and what the data shows about the protections they afford.

They also touch on the topic of the risks posed by hook-and-eye stirrups, commonly called peacock stirrups. Armand has been advocating for a ban on this design of stirrups in United States Equestrian Federation (USEF)-rated competition due to the injuries the upward-facing metal hook has caused, primarily to children, when dismounting or falling.

[Listen Free to the Full Plaidcast Episode](#)

*For advice and counsel related to the equestrian industry, contact Leone Equestrian Law at [info@equestriancounsel.com](mailto:info@equestriancounsel.com).*

*Led by Armand Leone, Jr., MD, JD, MBA, Leone Equestrian Law LLC provides legal services and consultation for equestrian professionals ranging from riders and trainers to owners and show managers in the FEI disciplines on a wide variety of issues.*

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