

Buying a Morgan Horse

Is the Morgan enjoying a thriving boutique marketplace? Or is the breed a secret hiding in plain sight from the larger equestrian community? Many questions. We should pursue answers.

By Denny Emerson



I have an active Facebook page, Tamarack Hill Farm, with about 112,000 followers, and because many of my posts are about Morgans I get frequent Morgan-related requests. The most frequent goes like this: “How do I go about finding Morgans for sale?”

There is no one simple answer and the more I thought about this the more I realized what a difference there is between insiders who already know about the breed and outsiders who are interested in learning more but who have had limited Morgan exposure.

When a Morgan insider is on the hunt for a new Morgan, she will have lots of resources and contacts that the non-Morgan person knows nothing about. The insider will know other Morgan owners and breeders; will have gone to Morgan shows; will belong to the American Morgan Horse Association; will subscribe to *The Morgan Horse*; will know about various Morgan websites and Facebook pages such as Morgan Showcase, Forever Morgans

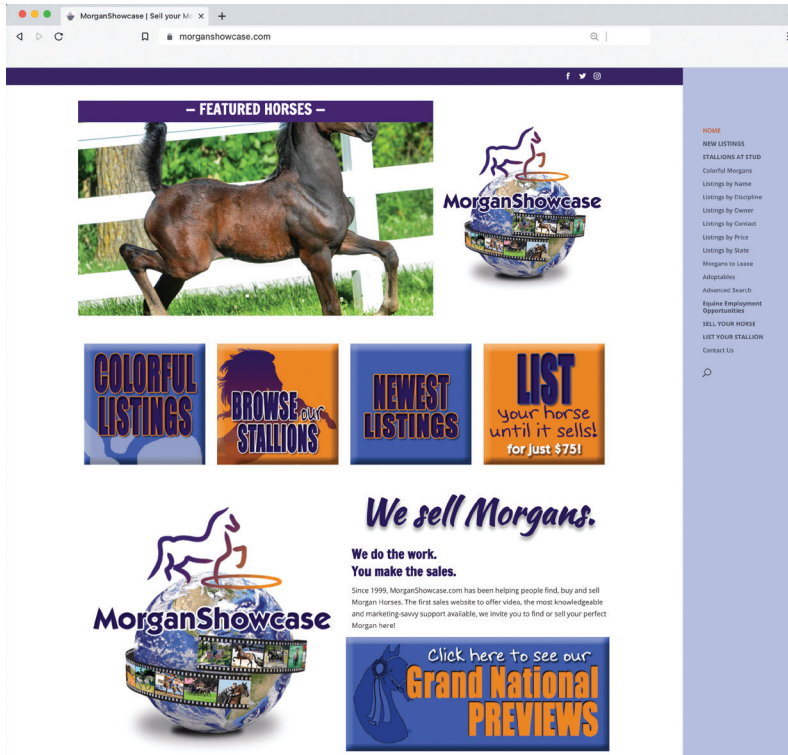
rescue organization, Morgan Horses We Love, or Morgan Sport Resources.

I bought two of my current Morgan mares through Morgan Showcase. My friend, Ted Niboli, knew that Catch A Cloud was in a tight situation because of her owner’s health. High Brook Rockstar came from long-time friends Laura and Matt Spittle. I found out about HD Waverly at the Miner Institute through word of mouth. It was easy for me in ways that wouldn’t have been possible if, for example, I had decided to buy a Quarter Horse.

I am a total outsider in the Quarter Horse world. I don’t know bloodlines or types or usages or breeders or owners. I haven’t been to big Quarter Horse shows, I don’t subscribe to the *Quarter Horse Journal*. My one advantage is that I do know enough about other breeds and disciplines to give me some ideas about where to start.

But back to finding my Morgan. I’d probably start with Google

ABOVE: The author had the advantage of insider knowledge that Catch A Cloud’s aging owner was no longer able to care for her, and thus the mare entered his life.



ABOVE: Where to buy a Morgan? The online option, the growing Amish auction circuit, and the remarkable supply chain coming from Canada (photos © Wade Wilcox, Lynn Cassels-Caldwell).

and plug in the term “Morgan horse.” I would be guided toward the American Morgan Horse Association, which, if I were serious enough, I would join. I would subscribe to *The Morgan Horse* magazine, which is crammed with ads, phone numbers, and addresses of Morgan owners. (I was personally surprised reading in this magazine recently about the remarkable number of attractive and functional Morgans coming from Canada to the American market. And, also, of the enormous role the Amish are playing in the production of Morgan horses. It occurs to me that people who say they can’t find a Morgan, aren’t looking in all the right places.) I would discover Morgan Showcase and other horse sale websites like DreamHorse. I would find a Morgan show to go watch, and, once there, I would wander the stable area striking up conversations and one thing would lead to another. So, now I have watched a Morgan show, have contacted some Morgan owners, I have joined the American Morgan Horse Association, and I get *The Morgan Horse* magazine. And now, I am no longer an outsider.

I may still have all sorts of questions. “What do I want to do with my Morgan once I buy one? Showing? Western? Driving? Dressage? Eventing? Trail riding? There are many options. Another big question is “What can I afford?” If I am on a tight budget, I may wish to investigate a Morgan rescue site. If I want a trained horse, an older “been there done that” animal in its teens will be less expensive, typically, than a seven- or eight-year-old but will still be perfectly sound and able. If I can do my own training, are

weanlings, yearlings, and two-year-olds usually less pricey than those already under tack? In addition to asking what do I want to do with my new Morgan, I would make a list of questions. What are my priority needs and wants? What are deal breakers? What can I spend? Whose advice do I trust? Where will I shop—online, sales ads, breeders, word of mouth, advice of trainers and friends?

Finding the perfect Morgan can be as easy as love at first sight or it can be frustratingly elusive, but that right horse is out there somewhere. Spread a wide net, put miles on your car, or hunt the internet. The more you learn before you buy, the better chance you will have of finding that special Morgan who will become your best friend forever. Good luck in your search!

In closing, I think it’s important for industry insiders to consider their position and what they can do to help facilitate a wider audience for the breed. My advice to the Morgan world would be to constantly consider what we can do to be sure this wonderful breed is not a too-carefully-guarded secret. Everyone who promotes locally by taking their Morgans to open or all-breed competitions, or exhibits at events like Equine Affaire, are doing both the breed and prospective buyers a huge service. I personally wish we could find a way to attract a larger audience to our major breed shows, specifically New England Regional and Grand National, where the Morgan’s diverse talents are so gloriously on display. ■