

BarnBuddy

What to look for

Facilities

What Makes a Good Barn



by Sara Stewart Martinelli

Searching for a good boarding facility for your horse can be overwhelming. Not only do prices usually range on a wide scale, but so do the amenities, services, and quality of the facilities. Before you even begin your search, determine what you need in the way of care and amenities. Make a list of the things that are most important to you, and determine the areas in which you might be able to settle for less.

We all want the very best for our equine friends, but sometimes our budget doesn’t cooperate with our dreams. The good news is that horses are not bothered by the same aesthetics as we often are. Their needs are much more simple, but there are some areas in which you should not compromise.

Safe Fencing, Stalls, Paddocks

The first thing to check is the condition of the fencing, stalls, and any other building or area that your horse may be kept. Age doesn’t really matter, but condition does. Check areas for exposed nails, sharp edges on panels, or broken wires in the fencing. Horses will find ways to hurt themselves no matter what we do to protect them, but ensuring that they are safely housed, both in pasture and in the barn, is a must

Experienced, on-site Staff

You are boarding your horse because you can’t keep him at home, so you need to be able to trust the staff at the facility to care for him. Staff should be readily available to you and willing to talk to you about your horse at any time. You need to be able to trust them to do whatever needs to be done in an emergency, and to always put the best interests of your horse first. Additional services, like blanketing, putting on fly masks, exercising and turnout are often available at higher end facilities, and you need to be sure that the staff is experience and capable at handling horses.

Good Quality Hay and Feed

Ask to see the hay before you agree to board somewhere. Take a little time to ensure the hay is high quality, not dusty, and stored properly. Ask where the hay comes from, and how often they take delivery. You should see a nice stock of hay – avoid facilities where they are clearly only purchasing enough hay to get by. This could be a sign of financial trouble. If there is pasture turnout and your horse will be getting a portion of his nutrition from fresh grazing, you need to walk the pasture and inspect what’s growing. If your horse eats a grain ration, or additional supplements, ask in advance how the facility handles that. Some facilities will custom feed your horse whatever you ask, while others will require you to measure and bag up meal size baggies so they don’t have to do that.

Facility Maintenance

Cleanliness of the Barn, Aisle, Stalls, and Tack Room – in addition to checking the buildings, barn aisle, pastures, and fences for safety, you should also look with a critical eye to see how the facility is maintained on a daily basis. Is it clean? Are the stalls cleaned daily? Does the tack room, and tack, look tidy and well-kept? Do things look organized and easy to find, like First Aid supplies? Are the barn aisles, grooming areas, wash racks clean, organized, and free of clutter? Observing how the facility is generally maintained can give you a good idea into the general culture of the facility. Remember, things don’t need to be fancy and new to be clean and well organized.

Secure Tack Room and Tack Storage

“Missing” tack is a notorious problem at even the nicest boarding facilities. People often borrow your supplies, thinking you won’t mind, and then forget to put it back or replace it. Does the facility have a secure tack room where you know your supplies are safe from theft or unwanted borrowing? Is there enough storage for all your tack and supplies on site?

Choosing a boarding facility to care for your treasured horse is hard, but with a little forethought, planning, and a critical eye, you can make the process a little easier.

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Hacienda Isabella

Redland Riding Academy

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