



Six essential tips on buying horse property.

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If you love horses like I do and have been thinking about upgrading from the boarding stables or buying a few of these gorgeous animals, the first thing you should do is check out some equestrian real estate. Here are some tips on buying horse property.

You adore your horses so you want to do what's best for them. At the very minimum, you want your team to have room to roam about on quality, safe land.

This will help them stay fit and happy. Horses are at their best when they have freedom of movement. Fortunately, there are lots of equestrian real estate options available if you know where and what to look for.

Here are some things to consider when buying a horse farm:

1. How to evaluate the safety of existing horse stables
2. Finding the best type of land for raising horses
3. The effect any possible zoning laws will have on your plans
4. If an adequate supply of water is on the property
5. How much acreage you'll need to accommodate each horse
6. If the property has been properly maintained over the years

Assess The Stabling

When it comes to finding the right facility for your horse, you'll quickly realize not all horse stables are created equal. Stable layouts can range from minimal features to a full-service set-up. However, those definitions are arbitrary and full-service for one stable can mean something entirely different at another. So, it is a good idea to find out exactly what each property offers when the real estate posting states "full-service." By asking the right questions, you can save yourself and your equestrian real estate agent a trip to a horse property that doesn't meet your needs.



Questions to consider include:

1. How old are the existing horse stalls and building?
2. What extras are built in, such as tack rooms, feed storage, and a grooming stall?
3. Are there other buildings, such as arenas, or equipment and hay storage?
4. Is there a waste management and drainage system in place?
5. Are the horse buildings fitted with electricity and hot water?
6. What percentage of the acreage is wooded vs pasture?
7. Do you have any problem with flooding or standing waters?
8. What maintenance will need to be done in the next two years?
9. Finding the best type of land for raising horses

Assess The Land

The process of finding quality soil and optimal land for horses may require a level of investigation deeper than your expertise permits. It encompasses more than just the number of acres, or the number of buildings on the land and the price. It also involves the vegetation, top soil, and the water and bedrock underneath it. All these things can have a bearing on your horse's health and strength. But how do you go about determining if the land you are considering is right for your horses?

The best way to go about it is to take a soil sample to your county extension office. They can analyze it for you and give you a detailed printout of your soil's composition. Also, talk to horse

experts in the area and find out what issues they've had to deal with. These issues are where a quality equestrian real estate agent can be worth their weight in gold. They'll know what to look for and ask about with each parcel you visit.

Zoning Changes?

Before purchasing a large parcel of land, you need to make sure that it has the proper zoning designation. Just because the acreage seems perfectly fit for horses, is remote, or has no neighbors does not necessarily mean you can put horses on it. You should look for land that is zoned AG (agricultural) or the city or county may not allow a horse farm.

Ask your realtor what specifically the property is zoned for before making the purchase... and then double-check the information on your own. Some counties have weird requirements that restrict where you can place your barn, in relation to the house, and so on. Be well-educated on zoning requirement and all rights before you buy into an equestrian estate!

Water Supply

Water is extremely important to the health of your horses. It helps with digestion and it helps prevent colic and dehydration.

On average, a single horse can drink anywhere from 5-10 gallons of water a day. Therefore, it is crucial that the horse property you are considering has access to plenty of drinking water, like ponds with safe drinking water and/or automatic watering systems.

Having water on or running through your land does not always mean you'll have the rights to it, however. And some land, believe it or not, will be sold without the right to even drill a well. Make sure you understand your water rights before you buy any type of land, and especially a horse farm.

Remember, if you lead a horse to water, he will definitely drink.

How Much Acreage?

Nothing is more natural to your horses' well-being than foraging. They love grazing in the

wide-open spaces and socializing with other horses. Before investing in a horse farm, you should make sure it is adequate for the number of horses you intend to have. At the very least, plan for two horses, as they are very social animals who need the company of another for mental health.

Now, you might think the equestrian real estate you have in mind is so vast you know there'll be enough room for your horses. But some of the land could be covered by swamps, woods, buildings, poor pasture, and even ponds. This type of land cannot be what is considered "usable acres" for foraging. Therefore, you'll need to subtract all such acreages from the total land purchase and allow for a minimum of two acres per horse of usable acres.

Some horse experts, such as Equi-therapy.net, say that "the general rule is to allow at least one and a half acres of grazing for the first horse and one acre for each horse or pony after that. Provision also needs to be made for every part of the pasture to be rested for at least six weeks, twice a year." We feel this is good advice but still recommend two acres per horse if you're currently in the market.

Horses are happiest with a lot of elbow room.

Maintenance Assessment

Unless you intend on buying a fixer-upper, perform a full inspection of the property... and then hire an equine expert to do the same inspection. Look for telltale signs of downed fencing, overgrowth and broken water lines. Chances are, though, you'll find varying degrees of neglect no matter which equestrian real estate you look at.

The key is to gauge how much time it will take to make repairs against how long before you'll need it to be ready. It doesn't hurt to ask the existing owner what they anticipate will need to be replaced or repaired in the next two years. You may not get full disclosure but some straight-shooters will tell it like it is, to the best of their knowledge. And of course, have a quality horse stable supplier like Saratoga Stalls on speed dial. They'll help you get your new horse farm up to standard and looking beautiful in no time at all.

When it comes to equestrian real estate, cheaper is not always better. Follow these tips and

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have your realtor show you a variety of parcels before settling on one.

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