

NEWS & FEATURES

What to consider before you commit.

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There are many considerations that make backyard horse keeping a viable option. Maybe there are no nearby boarding stables, or the cost of boarding at someone else's facility is prohibitive. Perhaps you're already set up with an existing barn and fencing. The presence of a great trail system or other equine facility nearby may make stabling your horse elsewhere a non-starter. In fact, your neighborhood may be home to many small horse properties, with regular riding companionship!

Smaller, private backyard horse barns and paddocks in older neighborhoods that have larger lots are really a necessity for the horse loving population as larger farms, stables and event places are continually replaced by development as previously open or agricultural lands is consumed. These neighborhood are subject to a few restrictions, and zoned for that purpose.



Newer planned equestrian communities, with amenities such as communal stabling facilities tend to be on the expensive side and require special zoning.

Know Your Zoning

Zoning ordinances spell out the basic regulations for keeping horses, or for that matter other livestock, on residential lots. You need to find out about these, and follow them.

- Those regulations may include:
- The number of horses that may be kept by the owner per acre of land;
- If horses belonging to outside boarders may be kept or not;
- How manure is to be disposed of;
- Types of fencing that are allowed;
- How a backyard or small farm should be laid out to achieve permitting approval;
- Required setbacks from adjacent homes, property lines, etc.;
- Inclusion of stormwater protection mechanisms, such as vegetated swales, infiltration ponds, etc., that can be found in local engineering and stormwater manuals;
- Accessory buildings, such as storage buildings and arenas, that may or may not be allowed;
- Before you start putting up barn and fence, communicate and make friends with your neighbors. Broach the subject of horse-keeping carefully. Ensure neighbors that you will act to prevent any negative impacts from affecting them.



About Liability

Even a casual horse operation, with a boarder or two to help offset costs, is legally a business. Talk to your insurance agent about business or commercial coverage. Remember, you are

responsible for the condition of all aspects of your property, and need to keep barns, fencing, paddocks, utilities and all other structures and paved areas in good shape.

Considerations for New Backyard Horse Facilities

Back-yarders need to consider the following before jumping in at the deep end:

1. Check those zoning ordinances for horse-keeping regulations. If you don't understand them, ask your planning and zoning office for help.
2. Have a professional engineer, architect or landscape architect assess your lot for soils that are not good for building on, for steep or very shallow slopes (poor drainage) and existing vegetation.
 - Create a muck enclosure to protect groundwater and streams from pollution.
 - Use permeable or pervious pavements for driveways and parking areas.
 - Install lighting that does not interfere with neighboring residences.
 - Plan for a sacrifice area for the muddy season or to give other turnout areas a rest.
 - Place drainage materials around outdoor waterers to prevent erosion.
 - Install sustainable stormwater collectors such as rain gardens, vegetated swales, and infiltration basins.
 - Follow stream buffer regulations and keep livestock away from stream and ponds.
 - If you decide that backyard horse keeping is for you, congratulations! You're on your way to being an informed and responsible owner.

Article reprinted with permission of the Equine Land Conservation Resource. ELCR has in-depth information available about horse friendly zoning at the following links:

- <https://bit.ly/2F8sW6l> - Article: "The Basics of Planning and Zoning for Horse-Friendly Communities," 2017.
- <https://elcr.org/zoning-best-practices/> - Guidebook: "Guide – Horse-Friendly Zoning Practices in American Communities," 2017
- <https://elcr.org/event/winter-17-webinar/> - Webinar: "How to Use and Understand ELCR's "Horse-Friendly Zoning Practices in American Communities," 2017
- <https://bit.ly/2SKB2Fz> - Webinar: "Horse-Friendly Zoning Practices in American Communities," 2018