

Finding a Livery Yard

The information below is a guide for people looking to find a suitable livery yard for their horse.

You may have a new horse, be looking to move your current horse to a more suitable yard or be moving to a new area in which case there are many factors outlined below which you need to take into consideration to help you find the right yard.

Finding a Yard

- **Where to Look** A good place to start is to ask around your local horsey friends, contact local riding clubs or ask your instructor. You could also place an advert in local saddlers or feed shops. Personal recommendations are always a good method of finding a good yard, particularly if the yard owner is known personally to you or an associate.

You could also try searching yards in your local area on online directories- such as Livery List. These will often have details of the yard, photos of facilities and contact details for the yard owner or manager. Consider the distance you are prepared to travel and factor this into your search.

- **What Type of Livery** Before searching for a yard, decide what type of livery you are looking for. If you work full time or are away a lot there is no point going to a DIY yard that does not offer assistance, similarly if you like to do your horse yourself there is no point enquiring for full livery. Work out your options and decide also what sort of costs you are prepared to pay per week. An approximation as to livery inclusions and costs for standard packages is as follows:

Grass Livery: £10 – £20 per week

With grass livery you are responsible for the day to day care and exercise of the horse. Often this livery arrangement is on a rental only basis for the grazing. The cost and responsibility for any other services, hay, feed etc lies with the horse owner. Usually the horses live out 24/7 and you do not have access to a stable, electric or other facilities as you may do at a stabled yard.

DIY Livery: £20 - £30 per week

With DIY (Do-It-Yourself) livery you are responsible for the day to day full care and exercise of the horse. Often this livery arrangement is on a rental only basis for stabling and grazing. The cost and responsibility for any other services, hay, feed etc lies with the horse owner. Often you will have access to ridden facilities such as a sand school and jumps inclusive within the livery package but facilities differ from yard to yard.

You do get yards offering 'assisted' DIY livery whereby the main livery is on the basis as described above but the yard offers the services of a yard manager or groom who is able to undertake services upon request- such as mucking out, turning out, exercise- and at an additional cost.

Part Livery: £50 - £80 per week

With part livery the yard is responsible for basic care of the horse- turning out, mucking out, watering, hay and feeding but this can vary yard to yard. The horse owner is responsible for exercise of the horse and cost and responsibility for any other services, hay, feed etc although this can also vary.

Full Livery: £80 - £150 per week

With full livery the yard is responsible for all day to day care of the horse. Many give the option of full livery with or without exercise and you usually look at considerably higher charges to include exercise, particularly for competition horses or hunters. Usually feed, hay and bedding are included within the cost of the livery. Occasionally other services may be included as well such as wormers, farriery, clipping and so on.

Working Livery: £30 - £80 per week

With working livery the horse is stables at a riding school which uses the horse for an agreed amount of hours per week for their clients. Usually the yard is responsible for all services as described in full livery and the horse owner's accessibility to ride the horse on non-working days will vary between yards.

- **Be Honest** If you contact the yard owners of any yards that seem suitable, be honest about your horse's behaviour and your experience. Some yards will not tolerate horses with certain vices- such as weaving or crib biting, and other yards do not allow children- so there is no point moving to a yard if any issues like these are likely to be a problem.
- **Choosing the Right Home** Ensure that you do not rush into making a decision in choosing a yard. Ensure that you feel the yard is the right home for you and your horse. There are always livery yard spaces becoming available so do not rush into moving to yard just because it is the best one available at that time- wait a few weeks and something more suitable may come along.

You will often find that you will have to compromise to find the right yard- it is unlikely that any yard will meet all of your needs. You may end up travelling a little further, paying a little more, or not having all of the facilities you require but you need to work out what are the most important aspects for you and be prepared to have to compromise,

Viewing of the Yard

- **The First Contact** When first contacting the yard owner it is important first and foremost to query as to whether they have any spaces available. Many yards often do but others run a waiting list system if they are popular and it is dependent upon your circumstances as to whether you can hold out for a space at the right yard if there is nothing available immediately. Arrange a mutual time between you and the yard owner or manager as to when you can visit to take a look.
- **Observe** When you arrive at the yard have a look at the current horses and the atmosphere of the yard. Check that all of the horses seem to be kept well and are in good condition. Have a look at the fields to see the state of the grazing and how the horses are behaving in the field, what the fencing is like and so on. Most importantly ask yourself if the horses look happy and if you think that your horse would fit well into the yard.
- **Ask Questions** Be prepared to ask a lot of questions, as silly or minor as they may seem. It is important for you to find out as much about the yard, facilities, services and the day to day routine of the yard. Some questions you may want to ask could be:

- Is there a yard manager or groom on site and what is their experience?
- Are the stables in good condition, light and airy?
- Is there a hard standing area to tie up for grooming, shoeing, hosing off and so on?
- Is there access to water and electricity on site and is this included in the livery cost?
- How many horses are in a herd, are they mixed herds and how would your horse be integrated to a new herd?
- How is the grazing, is there plenty of grass for the grazing horses and are the fencing and gates in good order?
- How often are the horses turned out, do they have restricted grazing in the winter and are they turned out 24/7 in the summer?
- Are there alternatives if the horses are unable to go out such as a horse walker or turnout in the sand school?
- What facilities are included in the costs- sand school, jumps XC course and what are the rules with regards to these?
- What is the hacking like, are the roads safe and how far to access off-road riding?
- Is there a worming routine and what worming would your horse require should you move there?
- What services are offered within the livery package and what are the exact responsibilities of the horse owner?
- Are they able to offer holiday cover and exercise if these are services you may need to use at any point?
- Does the owner live on-site, is there CCTV and look at accessibility/ visibility of the yard from the road and general security?
- Is there adequate and secure storage for feed, bedding and tack?
- Do they provide hay, feed or bedding on site or does this need to be ordered and arranged independently?
- Do they have a yard farrier or vet and what are the arrangements for this?
- Do they have adequate insurance (at least 3rd party) to cover all horses and visitors to the yard?
- Is there an instructor on site and if you have your own are they happy for your instructor to teach you at the yard?
- Are there any particular rules at the yard with regards to use of facilities, access or any restrictions?
- Are there other liveries about that you can talk to about their experiences of the yard?

Making Arrangements

- **Making a Deposit** Once you have decided on a yard you may need to pay a deposit to secure your place until you can move your horses there or until a space becomes available. Request a receipt for any deposit that may be paid. Don't forget that you may need to give notice at your current yard.
- **Arrange Transportation** Arrange a mutually convenient time for you and the yard owner when the horse can be moved to the yard. Try to keep the process as calm as possible for the horse.
- **Horse Details** Make sure that upon arrival you give the yard owner adequate information about yourself and your horse. Make sure that information is given about your horses routine, worming, feeds and so on. Make sure all equipment, feed bowls, feed bins and so on on are labelled for easy identification. Ensure that you give the yard owner emergency details for yourself, next of kin, and your preferred vet.

- **Make an Agreement** Ensure that you make a livery agreement with the yard owner. This should specify who is responsible for what aspects of the yard and care of the horse and should include details of any financial agreements. A signed copy of the agreement should be retained by both parties.
- **Settle In** Give your horse time to settle in and relax in their new surroundings. Some horses may settle in a day, others may take a few weeks so give it time for your horse to find his feet in its new herd. Similarly try to meet as many other liveries as soon as possible and introduce them to you and your horse. If you have any concerns or queries raise these as soon as possible with the yard owner or manager.

IMPORTANT

This information as provided above is intended to provide guidance and areas for consideration for those intending to enter into such arrangements. Anyone proposing to enter into such a written agreement should take consideration and their own legal advice as to their particular circumstances.

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