



Introducing New Liveries to Your Yard

The information below is a guide for people looking to rent out spaces for grazing or livery.

You may have a spare space for grazing in your field, a few spare boxes you want to rent out to earn some extra money or have taken over a yard to specifically offer livery services.

In any case the information below will help you with suitable candidates for any vacancies, correctly managing the paperwork and understand the responsibilities of all involved for taking a new horse onto your yard.

Advertising

- **How to Advertise Your Spaces** There are many ways to find new horses and owners to join your yard. From advertising online, in local publications, saddleries notice boards, local Facebook groups, through to riding clubs or just through word of mouth. The way you advertise should be determined by the type of client you are after and your level of knowledge of your potential clients. Word of mouth may be best if you want to be informed about potential clients- they are likely known to other horse owners in your area. The first port of call may even be your own existing clients who may have friends or acquaintances that may be looking to relocate to a new yard, or they may have contacts in their own riding circle (riding club, competition circuit etc) who may also be interested. The wider you cast the net of advertising the wider the knowledge of potential clients will be spread.

Be honest about what you are advertising. Ensure the package you offer is described honestly with prices, if you prefer, shown on the advert and clear details of any specific needs to be met (i.e must be a mare, must be pony under 14.2 etc). Direct people to your website, if applicable, and give them plenty of options to contact you such as contact phone numbers and an email address. Most importantly, make sure you respond promptly to any enquiries for the vacancy.

- **Who to Invite to View the Yard** What is ideal is to advertise sufficiently to find several potential clients and see who would fit the yard best, but this is not always possible if there are very few enquiries. It is also hard to know on initial contact how well a potential client would you're your yard, especially if they enquire by text, private message or email and it is difficult to determine information about themselves or their horse. It maybe that you arrange a viewing by messages alone and the second they arrive at the yard you know they will not fit in! It is always best, after initial contact, to suggest they give you a call directly to discuss what they are after, find out about their horse and see if you think they may be a genuine possibility. Think about asking for the following as key information before a visit is considered. These should give you a good indication of how well a new horse (and owner) may fit on the yard:

- Size, breed, age and sex of the horse
 - How long has the horse been owned
 - What activities do they undertake with the horse
 - Does the horse have any illnesses, injuries or behavioural difficulties
 - Does the horse have any specific needs (restricted grazing, riggy, specific diet etc)
 - How well does the horse settle in a new yard
 - What livery package they are wanting
 - What type of yard or livery package are they on at present
 - What reason are they leaving their existing yard
 - When are they looking to move
- **Finding Out About the Owner** The horse is not the only concern as a new arrival on the yard. Often yards run smoothly because there are friendships and camaraderie between established livery clients and often a new client who does not gel well can 'upset the apple cart'. It is just as vital to ensure that the new livery client is of similar personality and disposition of your existing clients and that the harmony of the yard continues as uninterrupted as possible. It is worth bearing in mind to find out a little more about the person too during that initial contact.
 - Age of owner and riding experience
 - Are they members of any riding clubs or do they compete
 - Which farrier, vet, instructor etc they use
 - Does anyone else loan/ part loan/ share/ ride/ help care for the horse
 - Are they known to existing liveries
 - Do they drive
 - Do they have children
 - What is their employment status (student, part time, unemployed)
 - Can they provide a reference from their current yard owner
 - Notice period for current yard

These questions can give you an indication as to the type of person they are, whether they are likely to be able to afford the packages or routines offered at your yard and their level of competency amongst other things. While this information may seem intrusive and extreme, it is worth remembering that any fallouts on your yard can leave to bad feeling and people leaving and, in the worst circumstances, ultimately damage to the reputation of yourself or your yard so it is well worth putting in the research to find someone that will fit well.

- **Telling Them About You** The information exchange works both ways. New clients may be looking to meet changing needs, or have a specific reason they want to move yard (better facilities, more turnout, closer to home etc) and equally you should inform, them as much as possible about the yard, what you offer and how you work during your call because it may be that there and then they decide it is not right for them. Some information you could consider sharing with them would include:
 - Livery packages you offer and related costs
 - Protocol for new liveries (isolation, worming, blood tests)
 - Competitions, events etc held on site or local venues
 - What the current horses are like (uses, size, temperament)
 - What the current livery clients are like (age range, personalities, social events)
 - Facilities and use of (i.e any restrictions, extra costs)
 - Grazing and use of (i.e restricted grazing, winter turnout, 24/7)
 - Any specific conditions (i.e buy hay from yard, must use yard farrier, no children etc)
 - Yard routine and responsibilities of the horse owners on the yard

There is no point 'sugar coating' any negative aspects of your yard, or making false promises as to any element of what you are offering as this will only end in the livery being unhappy with services or facilities and potentially wanting to leave. Ensure you are honest about what you can offer, and this will ensure that you are on the same level with the potential client as to each other's expectations and whether they can be met by them joining your yard.

The Viewing

- **Arrange a Meeting** Now you've satisfactorily vetted potential clients you can invite them to a viewing at the yard. However, do bear in mind that every time a stranger enters the yard you are compromising your security so try to ensure only people genuinely interested visit the yard. You should arrange this as soon as possible at a time convenient to yourself. Confirm the day before that they are still coming and confirm the time. It is an idea to choose a busy time on the yard, when horses are in and other liveries or staff are present. You can then see how the potential client interacts with the horses and people they meet on the yard and it will give them a sense of the yard itself- horses, how it runs etc. After all, you may feel they are suitable, but they may decide the yard is not for them.
- **First Impressions** Timeliness and presentation of the potential client says a lot, but it can work both ways- make sure the yard is also clean, tidy and well-presented and that you are there to meet them at the agreed time and have adequate time to give them a tour and have a chat. Whilst undertaking the viewing try to show the potential client as much as possible but in a safe and sensible manner, especially if they are a complete stranger! Most importantly show them the grazing, the herd their horse is likely to join, the stable that is available and the riding facilities. It may be that you realise immediately they are not right for you as a client. In which case keep the viewing brief- there is no point in wasting your or their time. If the first impressions are good, ask them as many questions as possible about themselves and their horse, and equally encourage them to ask any questions or raise any concerns they may have.
- **When do you mention the C-Word** Contract. Contract. Contract. So important for all parties. Make sure you take a copy of your livery contract to the viewing. If you or they feel the yard is not right, there is no point in mentioning it. However, if all is looking positive you should show them a copy of the contract for their information whilst they are at the yard on the day of the viewing. You don't want them to come to the yard with their horse and on the first day be provided with a contract that is not suitable for them, or that they disagree with. Make sure you have a clearly laid out contract and give them a copy to look at (not to take away) with adequate time for them to read through it and raise any questions. You should also advise them of any protocol you have in place for new horses such as blood tests, worming insurance requirements and the like to ensure this is in line with their expectations.
- **Acceptance of a Space** If everyone seems happy you can mutually agree that they can join the yard there and then proceed to make the arrangement to move their horse, although if there is any doubt do encourage them to go home and sleep on it and come back to you the following day. Advising potential clients if you've had other enquiries will often help weed out the time wasters and will encourage genuinely interested parties to come back to you quickly to answer one way or another.

If the person is known to you, you may be happy to accept on word of mouth. However, if you do not know them and have had other enquiries on the space it may be worth asking for a deposit to hold the space until they are able to make arrangements to leave their current yard. If this is a considerable amount of time, for example a months' notice period, you can rightfully request that they contribute towards the stable during this notice period as you may have sourced an

alternative client that could have moved immediately. Ensure a receipt is given for any deposit taken, and that they advise you as soon as possible of an approximate arrival date for the horse.

- **Saying No.** Sometimes when someone visits the yard you will feel at some point they are just not right for the yard. Be it them or their horse if you get this feeling it is advisable not to offer a stable to them, even if it has been empty for a while, and to wait for someone more suitable to come along. In this situation, honesty is the best policy. There is no point telling them the stable is 'taken', only for them to see it continues to be advertised, and do not string it out making them wait whilst they could be finding alternative stabling elsewhere. Just be honest and state the reason why you feel it would not work in the politest way possible.

However, do bear in mind that you will often find you will have to compromise to find the perfect livery- it is unlikely that anyone will meet all your requirements. There are always people looking for livery so do not rush into filling a vacancy just because the person can move immediately or wants a more expensive livery package- if they do not fit in you will only end up with an empty box again in the long run. Equally, a reason for refusing a livery may be something that is workable which could change your mind if you are honest with them and it is discussed and a mutual agreement made.

Arriving at the Yard

- **Arranging the Arrival of a New Horse.** Once a new client has agreed to fill a space, and the necessary arrangements made you need to sort everything ready for their arrival. If the stable has been empty for a little while this should be no problem with plenty of time to sort out arrangements. It is not so simple if they are moving in within a day or so of another horse leaving, but even so a good plan of action and ensuring the previous livery leaves everything cleared, neat and tidy will make life easier. Being organised will make the transition of a new livery quick and easy without them intruding on other people's storage areas, or getting off on the wrong foot with anyone. Some things to consider:
 - Cleaning and disinfecting the stable floor and walls
 - Checking all stable fittings, doors, light bulbs
 - Clearing a designated space in the tackroom or storage areas
 - Filling their hay/ bedding spaces with supplies (if applicable)
 - Making the bed, filling water and a haynet (if applicable)
 - Advise all other liveries of a new arrival
 - Preparing for wormer, worm counts, isolation protocol etc
 - Printing out two copies of the contract
- **Paperwork.** There are some formalities to be undertaken on the day of arrival. This should be done promptly so everyone knows where they stand, and so it is not forgotten! Most yards will undertake the following upon arrival which ensures good record keeping so make sure you have the necessary pieces to hand, and remind the new client to bring along their necessary documents the day of arrival:
 - Signed contracts (one copy each)
 - Price list for assisted or additional services
 - Fill in a Horse Details Form
 - Take details of their preferred vet, farrier, dentist etc
 - Check current feed and forage regime
 - Take a copy of the horses passport for ID
 - Take a copy of the horses vaccination records
 - Request a copy of the horses insurance

- A copy of the owners utility bill for proof of address
- Take all contact details for the owner and a next of kin contact
- If the horse is loaned get details of the owner
- Request any necessary advance livery payment and security deposit

Although this seems extreme, they are all there to protect the yard owner, the horse and the livery client. If there are any issues with the horse or owner, you need to know who to contact in an emergency if you cannot communicate with the owner. The contract clearly lays out the terms of the agreement including payment terms. However, it is not uncommon for owners to have financial difficulties or disputes with yard owners that result in debts which need to be recouped hence the confirmation of the name and address of the owner in case such an issue should arise or any legalities relating to ownership of the horse.

The same applies to the security deposit. It is wise to take livery fees 'up front' meaning clients have paid a month in advance. That way if they ever hand in their notice, or leave without notice, they are paid to the end of that month irrespective if the notice period is carried out. A security deposit is recommended to cover the possibility of any damage by the horse or its owner during their stay at the yard. At termination of their agreement this can be used to pay for any damages or unpaid bills without the need to chase them for money. This also encourages clients to be more careful, knowing if they or their horses cause damage during their contract period.

- **Isolation Period.** Many yards these days take the health and welfare of their existing liveries very seriously. This means when a new horse enters their yard they want to ensure it is free from infection or disease. As well as checking vaccination records, it is advised to worm and isolate all new horses on a yard for at least 5 days, sometimes longer if you are awaiting results of blood tests for the like of Equine Influenza or Strangles. During this period, other liveries, horses on the yard and staff should have absolute minimum contact with the horse.
- **A Guided Tour.** Now the new horse and owner have arrived its time to show them the important stuff and make them feel at home. You want their transition to be as smooth as possible and as such its important to give them a fully guided tour of the yard and going through any important information they may need to know. Things to consider include:
 - Where to find and store their tools and equipment
 - Access codes and lighting
 - Facilities including any controls, lighting and specific rules
 - Tea room, first aid kit, fire extinguisher etc
 - Muckheap and poo picking arrangements
 - Yard noticeboard/ diary and means of communication
 - Introduce to other liveries
 - Suggesting local riding routes
- **Settling in period.** Make sure you introduce the new client to existing liveries on the yard and their horses. Make sure they ask you any questions or anything they are unsure of which they should happily do. The yard is your responsibility, along with the other horses, so ensure you over see the most important aspect of the horses being introduced to the yard, such as the first time it is turned out in the herd. Suggest to the new client about riding out with some of the other clients to be shown some riding routes, and guide them in the right direction if they are unsure of yard routine or what to do in certain circumstances. Remember I will all be very new to them, so it is not uncommon for them to come to you in the first few weeks with questions or reassurance.

Teething Problems

- **Sorting out Herds.** Not all horses get on. It's a fact. Especially if a particularly dominant horse arrives it could cause some problems for the existing hierarchy of a herd. It can take a little while for a new horse to settle so, unless there are any serious issues, it is best to leave the horse within the herd to settle; rather than change the herds and arrangements leading to inconvenience for the yard staff and other horse owners. If problems continue after a couple of weeks, or serious issues arise, it is best to think of a suitable solution which everyone is happy to work with.
- **Pushing the boundaries.** All new and existing clients know what their responsibilities are on a yard; and what their package includes. It is advisable to not get too friendly with livery clients and to maintain a business relationship. Although a little help would be welcomed by new clients; ensure not to set the bar of going out of your way if it will cost you time or money or is above and beyond commitments you want to make. Other existing livery clients will notice, and you could end up with a mutiny on your hands if they feel new clients are getting a better offer or special treatment.
- **Building bonds.** As all horses will not get on, the same applies to their owners. There can be a vast range of differences on yards between owners from the reasons they ride to their age ranges or just personality clashes. However, they all have horse in common, and all share being at the same yard. Ensure new clients are included in any social media groups for the yard, or are invited to any social occasions so everyone gets to know them better and they feel part of the group. The more time people spend together the more they may realise they have things in common and build better relationships between the owners.
- **Raising any issues.** During the first few weeks, it is imperative that new livery clients are encouraged to ask any questions they may have, ask anything they don't know and, most importantly, raise any concerns they have with you directly. It is important to point out that, as the business owner and manager of the yard, you should be the first point of contact with any problems, not the other liveries or to be aired publicly on social media groups. Make sure that you develop a trusting and friendly relationship with your clients, remaining approachable whilst retaining the position of being in charge.

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.