

your horse...no shoes; outside sometimes or all the time; alone or in a herd?

### 3. Looks good so far...now what?

Once you have inspected a particular facility and feel it may be suitable, here are 15 key things you need to do.

1. Have a long chat with the barn manager/owner and as many other people there as possible.
2. Ask for references and about all protocols, such as what your horse will be fed, when and by whom. Remember, every time your horse is handled it is a training experience – either a good one or a questionable one.
3. How are emergencies handled?
4. What vaccinations are required?
5. How often is de-worming done and with what product?
6. Do they get their hay analyzed?
7. Do they have trainers on site?
8. Are you allowed to bring in your own trainer?
9. How often are herd mates changed, if ever?
10. How do they introduce new horses to the herd?
11. Do they have any insurance for personal or horse injuries?

A great way to discover how happy the horses are at a boarding facility is to ask stories about them. Ask the person in charge to describe their personalities. Get him/her to tell you about their good and not-so-good qualities, where they've come from and how long they've been there. Ask about the worst and best things that have ever happened on the property. Hopefully they will give you funny and inspirational stories. But if you start to hear things like "oh, that horse is a bully or difficult to manage", and other unbecoming behaviors, then you'll know the environment has an unsettling nature.



12. Who do they use for veterinary care?
13. Do they offer clinics? If so, what kind?
14. If they have an indoor arena, how is the time scheduled? It can be frustrating to pay extra for something you can hardly use because of lessons or clinics being scheduled.
15. Finally, if you can, show up a second time unexpectedly to see if things are still the same.

## Hint

Trust your own instincts.

Do you feel a sense of calmness on the property or does tension fill the air? Horses often mirror their caregivers!

### 4. You get what you pay for

Prices can range from \$225 to \$500 per month. But be careful about comparing facilities to the fees charged. You usually get what you pay for. If it's too good to be true, it probably is. I know many people who have chosen a boarding facility based on what they charge, only to discover that saving a few dollars has cost their horse a lifetime of emotional damage. Put your horse's well being first, and scout around before making a decision.

*Continued on next page...*

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