

Red Flags When Choosing a Barn

Chapter 2

None of these alone means walk away. Several together mean slow down and ask harder questions.

Barn _____

Date visited _____

WHAT THE BOARD PRICE ACTUALLY COVERS

Ask for this line by line, and get the answer in writing. The advertised number is rarely the number you pay.

Item	Included in board?	If extra, how much
Turnout	_____	_____
Grain, and which one	_____	_____
Hay, and how much per day	_____	_____
Blanketing	_____	_____
Holding for vet or farrier	_____	_____
Fans, heaters, or fly spray systems	_____	_____
Medication or supplement administration	_____	_____
Arena or trailer parking fees	_____	_____

WHO IS GIVING MEDICAL OPINIONS

- ☐ Someone without veterinary credentials interprets radiographs, PPE results, or diagnoses
- ☐ The barn owner or trainer also buys and sells horses
- ☐ Boarders describe running decisions past the barn owner rather than their own veterinarian
- ☐ A horse you own or are considering is run down by someone who did not sell him to you

WHO IS ALLOWED TO TOUCH YOUR HORSE

- ☐ You cannot use your own veterinarian
- ☐ You cannot use your own farrier
- ☐ Vendor restrictions are stated as policy, but no written insurance requirement can be produced
- ☐ The barn holds categorical positions on modalities and enforces them on horses that are not theirs

WHAT THE LONGEST-STANDING STUDENTS CAN DO

- ☐ An owner who has been here for years cannot tack up her own horse
- ☐ A rider several years in cannot tell you which lead she picked up
- ☐ A rider does not notice she is sitting on the wrong diagonal
- ☐ Basic horsemanship is done for the riders rather than by them
- ☐ Students cannot explain why they are doing what they are doing

Red Flags When Choosing a Barn

Chapter 2

None of these alone means walk away. Several together mean slow down and ask harder questions.

HOW RIDERS ARE MOVED UP

- ☐ Readiness is described in terms of jump height rather than fundamentals
- ☐ Riders are jumping courses they cannot yet see distances to or adjust the canter within
- ☐ A rider cannot reliably stop or steer her horse on a hack without a trainer present
- ☐ You have watched riders from this program get hurt, and the falls looked predictable
- ☐ Pressure to move up comes from the program rather than from the rider or her parents

HOW THE BARN HANDLES INFORMATION

- ☐ Rules are justified by a story rather than a reason
- ☐ Nobody can tell you why a required practice exists
- ☐ Questions are met with defensiveness rather than an answer
- ☐ Your instinct is that people here have stopped asking

A barn that cannot tell you why a rule exists is a barn that will hand you the next wrong thing with exactly the same confidence.

WHY I AM ACTUALLY CONSIDERING THIS BARN

Proximity, price, and the people your family already loves are real reasons. Name them, then write down what you are accepting in exchange.

I am choosing this barn because

WHAT I AM ACCEPTING IN EXCHANGE

Some lists are worth it. A list with a safety item on it is not.