

## Security and Licenses

When choosing a livery yard for your horse it is important to be extra vigilant about checking the facilities offered and what security is in place. There have been a number of cases where horses at livery have been mistreated and as a result livery yards have come under greater scrutiny as concerns over equine welfare have increased. Unlike other animal establishments livery yards do not have to be licensed and there is no control over the standard of care offered. Anyone can open a livery yard regardless of his or her experience.

To offer horse owners reassurance the BHS has set up a Livery Yard Approval Scheme, in conjunction with BEVA (British Equine Veterinary Association), WHW (World Horse Welfare), RSPCA (Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty against Animals) and DEFRA (Department for Environmental Food and Rural Affairs), which provides guidelines for the running of a safe yard with high standards of care and facilities that are of an acceptable level. It is hoped that the scheme will help owners choose a yard that is safe and reliable and also improve welfare nationwide. At the moment the scheme is voluntary but the BHS are campaigning to make it compulsory. However, they still have over 900 approved establishments on their records.

In order to obtain approval by the BHS a livery yard must apply to the scheme and undergo a detailed inspection. An annual visit is then carried out by the inspector to ensure that any changes have been made and standards are maintained. Areas that are scrutinized in the inspection are:

- An overview of the horses
- Stabling
- Paddocks and turnout-out facilities
- Tack rooms
- Feed rooms and stores
- Training equipment such as show jumps
- Indoor riding school
- Maneges
- Cross country course
- Public amenities
- Health and safety
- Public Liability Insurance

Following their visit the inspector will write up a report which is then submitted to the Approvals Scheme for consideration. If the yard gains approval they will be provided with a plaque as confirmation and listed, along with a description of the yard and facilities, in the BHS publication 'Where to Ride, Train and Stable Your Horse' available through the BHS. Membership of the scheme costs livery yards £229 a year, which further proves their commitment to providing a good and safe service for their clients.

If you are considering a livery yard that has not taken part in the Approval Scheme then follow the BHS lead and check out the yard with their guidelines in mind. From a legal point of view it is important that the proprietor has an agreement drawn up that covers all angles so that both they and the owner are aware of their responsibilities when it comes to the horse.

If your horse is at livery on a DIY (Do-It-Yourself) basis you will need to check the facilities extra carefully as if there is a problem with the horse the responsibility lies with you as the owner. If the horse is on Full Livery then there is less responsibility on the part of the owner. However, if the horse does any damage it is generally the owner who is responsible. It is important that the yard proprietor carries Third Party Public Liability Insurance and the owner of the horse Third Party Insurance in case of any accidents.

The BHS hopes that their new scheme will help owners choose a good livery service where their horse will be safe and well looked after. It is essential that any owner chooses their livery yard very carefully and if they are in any doubt to check with the BHS. When you leave the livery yard to go home you are leaving your horse in someone else's hands and it is important that those hands are capable, reliable and will keep your horse safe.

## Top Tips for Choosing a Livery Yard

- Carry out research before choosing your yard and check the facilities are adequate and in good condition.
- Pay a visit to the yard.
- Check on the BHS website for approved yards in your area.
- Make sure you sign an agreement with the proprietor.
- Make sure your insurance is up to date and you are fully covered.