



# HORSE SENSE

## Maximizing Barn Design



### **A well-built barn can help keep horses happier and healthier.**

(NAPS)—Keeping horses safe and comfortable is the No. 1 priority when constructing a new equestrian barn. But owners also want a stylish and functional building that is durable and can withstand the demands of housing their equine companions.

#### **Building A Better Barn**

To help ensure the building will meet the needs of horse owners and their animals, Dennis Lee, equestrian product line manager at Morton Buildings, shares design recommendations.

**Be realistic about future needs—**In determining barn size, don't limit the building dimensions based on how many horses you have now. That number may increase as your family or equestrian activities expand. "For example, build a six-stall barn and finish only two stalls now, and use the remaining space for storage," Lee says. "It will be far more cost-effective to finish additional stalls later rather than having to expand the barn."



**Think about utilities—**New barn owners often underestimate their lighting, electrical and water needs. Wash stalls should include two lights to minimize shadows under the horse. Switched outlets for stall fans, weatherproof outlets to run a set of clippers or possibly veterinary equipment, and electric baseboard heat in the feed room to keep feed warm and dry are all popular features. Don't forget the exterior lights. In the wintertime, when daylight hours are short, you will appreciate having ample outdoor lighting.

**Consider your horse management style—**Some owners like to leave their animals in the pasture during the daytime; others prefer the convenience of having Dutch doors that give horses access to outdoor paddocks from their stalls. How you intend to manage your

horses will have a direct bearing on the barn design.

**Plan for the right stall sizes—**Consider not only the type of horses you own today, but also those you may have in the future. A 10-by-10-foot stall may be fine now for a child's pony, but perhaps not for the larger horse they want when they're older. "It's far better to have a smaller horse in a large stall than trying to confine a large animal in a stall that's too small. Small stalls are not only unsafe and uncomfortable—they can also drastically affect the future resale value of your property," Lee explains.

**Ensure good ventilation—**Lee notes that windows and doors alone may not be sufficient ventilation to address the ammonia formed as urine breaks down. Installing stall fans can be more effective in moving air down into the stalls and creating airflow through the center of the barn compared to just opening windows and doors. Ventilated cupolas or ridge caps in conjunction with ventilated overhangs are also recommended.

**Plan for floor comfort and safety—**Equipping stalls with dense rubber mats, 1.5 inches thick, on top of well-compacted stone screenings or an ag-lime base will provide comfort while also helping to prevent slips and falls for people and animals. "Stall mats make the stalls much easier to clean and will help prevent hollowing out over time," Lee says. "In other areas of the barn with a concrete surface, use a textured finish instead of a trowel finish, which can be slippery when wet. Rubber mats in the wash stall are also a great idea."

**Consider functional aesthetics—**Lee adds that design features such as cupolas and wainscots can give visual appeal to a new barn. A diamond M door with a fixed window for the top half lets you work in the barn and still keep an eye on what's going on outside. Ceiling skylights or translucent side-lights installed at the top of barn walls will allow more light into the building.

#### **Learn More**

For additional information, visit [www.mortonbuildings.com/projects/equestrian](http://www.mortonbuildings.com/projects/equestrian).