

Farm diversification new business ideas – Services

Horse Livery

Key points to consider

- Location of the livery in a large horse population area is necessary.
- Looking after horses requires a high level of specialised expertise.
- Full-time & part-time equine courses are available through Enniskillen College.
- Livery premises require planning permission and will be liable for rates.
- A contract between service provider and horse owner is recommended.



Market overview

The scale of the equestrian industry in Northern Ireland has developed significantly in recent years. For farmers with the necessary skills and experience, there may be potential to expand into the livery sector. To date, approximately 238 farm businesses have diversified into an equine sport business representing 10% of all diversified farms (Source: EU Farm Structures Survey 2000).

There were approximately 30,000 horses and ponies in the province in 1997, compared to 20,500 in 1985. Surveys show there is a greater concentration of horses in counties Antrim and Down than in other areas of the province. An estimated 13,600 people are involved in equine pursuits. Eighty per cent of equine owners either own or take land in conacre with the remainder using livery services.

There is a wide range of equine-type businesses, all requiring expertise in working with horses and ponies. The most immediate way to gauge the local market possibilities for livery is via personal and professional contacts. Success tends to be based on a reputation acquired through previous experience.

Service delivery requirements

A livery is a facility where owners keep their horses and ponies on other premises for a fee. There are several levels of livery, depending on the services being offered or required.

Types of livery

Full: This offers full care of the animal, including light exercise.

DIY: Stables and exercise area only provided. Feeding, care and exercise is the owner's responsibility. The livery operator may supply fodder and bedding.

Grass livery: Provision of grazing and/or shelter.

Working livery: This is also known as half or part livery and care of the horse is offered in return for its use by the operator as full or part payment.

Housing and facilities

Modifications to unused farm buildings can provide suitable accommodation at lower costs than new buildings. The amount of capital expenditure to alter buildings will vary from farm to farm and will depend on the construction of existing facilities, the extent of conversion and the availability of equipment and skilled family labour.

A tack room, storage for hay/bedding and stables are required. The latter should measure 3.9m x 3.6m with adequate ventilation and no draughts. A free-draining floodlit outdoor exercise area measuring 40m x 20m (minimum) should be available for individuals to ride and exercise their horses. This paddock should be located relatively close to the stabling area.

Food

Hay is the traditional feed for horses, though in recent years owners have been increasingly using high dry matter silage or haylage.

Labour/training

Potential livery owners would be expected to have a solid background in equine work. Enniskillen College provides a wide range of equine related education and training programmes from Degree to NVQ Level 2 Awards. These programmes can be studied on a full-time or part-time basis.

Marketing and promotion

Promoting a new livery would be done initially through the network of equestrian organisations and events. Other marketing methods such as advertising, printing of business cards and leaflets – would be a necessary follow on to verbal promotion.

Legal requirements

Advice should be sought about planning and insurance implications. For a new building or change of use of an existing building, planning permission should be sought from The Planning Service at the Department of the Environment.

A premises licence is not required for a livery yard. However, if riding lessons are being offered a licence must be obtained from your local Divisional Veterinary Office.

A contract between the horse owner and the livery provider is recommended. The livery contract will usually state the name of the veterinary surgeon and farrier to be used and identify specific responsibilities of the owner and/or the operator of the livery yard.

Financial considerations

In general terms, the financial success of this business is based on the twin issues of mutual trust and a business-like relationship between the owner/manager of the yard and the clients.

Income from a livery business will depend on the following criteria:

- Location of business;
- Type/level of livery offered;
Full livery service - £45 per week
DIY livery service - £18 per week
- Competition between providers in region;
- Variable costs and overheads.

Further contacts

For more information and advice contact:

Enniskillen College
Levagh, Enniskillen, BT74 4GF
Tel: 028 6634 4890
Fax: 028 6634 4888
Website: www.enniskillencollege.ac.uk

British Horse Society
House of Sport, Upper Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 5LA
Tel: 028 9038 3801
E-mail: bhsireland@aol.com
Website: www.bhsireland.co.uk

Contact your local Divisional Veterinary Office for advice on licensing requirements.

This information sheet has been compiled by Rural Enterprise Advisers.

For advice and guidance on your farm diversification idea contact your local Rural Enterprise Adviser. For details of the adviser in your area:

Tel: 028 9052 4406.
E-mail: ruralenterprise.afds@dardni.gov.uk
Website: www.ruralni.gov.uk/farmdiversification

Note: the information provided herein is for general information only. It is not necessarily complete and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any proposed enterprise. The market and circumstances may change substantially. Further research will be required before embarking on any new enterprise.

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