

## **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

### **EQUESTRIAN CENTER MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

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1. Best practices for Equestrian Facility Management:
  - a. What facilities and appurtenances are required for an effective and sustainable equestrian operation?
    - i. The Maryland Horse Industry Board (MHIB) requires that each horse be provided with shelter that is clean, dry, well ventilated (but not drafty) and protects the horse from inclement weather. The stables surrounding the areas must also be kept neat and orderly and in good repair. This includes making sure that manure has not excessively accumulated, and that flies and rodents are well controlled. Fences that confine horses must be sturdy and in good repair, stalls cleaned regularly, and each horse must have bedding of suitable material that is changed daily and keeps the horse clean and dry.
    - ii. Tools used in the stable must be properly stowed and the area must be free of hazards.
    - iii. Each horse under the licensee's control must be provided with adequate foot (good quality and free of contaminants) water, and salt in suitable containers.
    - iv. Each horse must receive routine regular care to include but not limited to: worming, dental and foot care. If a horse is ill, injured or lame it must receive immediate attention.
    - v. A sustainable equestrian barn structure requires individual stalls, a tack storage room, hay/feed storage room, electricity and running water.
    - vi. An outdoor and ideally an indoor riding ring consisting of an enclosed fence and a soft footing substrate such as sand, wood products, stone dust or topsoil and a fenced in, outdoor paddock space for turn out of the horses are also necessary. The paddock fields need to be separated by fences and have some degree of grass and soft footing such as dirt for horses. A separate paddock is required for ponies. The pony paddock area(s) should not contain grass and only requires a soft footing substrate such as dirt or fine gravel. The number of paddocks depends on the number of horses the barn can comfortably house.
    - vii. Finally, a small house for the barn manager to reside is very typical to most equestrian operations. In the event of an emergency, the barn

manager is always on site to tend to the property as well as the welfare of the animals.

- b. What are best practices for the maintenance and upkeep of all buildings, grounds, and equipment?
  - i. The barn manager(s) is/are responsible for minor repairs and basic upkeep of the grounds, buildings and equipment on a daily basis. This includes but is not limited to fence repairs, stall door repairs, dragging the sand/foot substrate around the ring to preserve footing, maintenance of jump standards utilized by English style riders and tack maintenance.
- c. What are the typical approaches to implementation of capital improvement and maintenance programs?
  - i. Upon commencement of the lease and operation of the horse barn, the licensee/lessee would have put in place both a multi-year capital improvements plan and accompanying budget and an annual maintenance plan/program and budget. The maintenance plan would include the distinct items referenced above and other day to day and/or periodic maintenance that, per the leasing arrangement would largely be the responsibility of the licensee/lessee. Once the barn is up and running, the objective would be for the cash flow from operations to be sufficient to cover the cost of the maintenance and rent but, the licensee/lessee might establish a maintenance reserve in case of any shortfalls. Regarding capital improvements, the lease would set forth those types of capital improvements that would customarily be the responsibility of the lessor and those that would be the responsibility of the licensee/lessee. For those items for which the licensee/lessee is responsible, a capital improvements reserve might be established.
- d. What are the relevant regulations, including environmental and safety standards, that equestrian facilities must and/or should comply?
  - i. The state of Maryland (as well as Montgomery County specifically) has guidelines and regulations for safe equestrian facility operation and they perform site visits to ensure compliance and proper execution. One important issue is the proper manure/waste storage and removal. There are limitations on the number of horses that can be kept on the property which is calculated with a per horse unit / per acreage formula. Liability insurance for equine facilities mandates proper safety precautions are enforced such as the wearing of ASTM approved safety helmets at all times while on a horse. Additionally, multiple fire extinguishers, low heat emitting LED lights, no smoking rules and smoke detectors should be utilized throughout to reduce risk of fire.

- ii. The state of Maryland requires a license (to be renewed annually) to be obtained through the Maryland horse industry board. The board conducts routine visits to also ensure compliance.
- 2. Best practices and potential offerings for Equestrian activities:
  - a. What are the typical services offered and/or required to facilitate and maintain the availability of equestrian activities?
    - i. Full-service boarding for client owned, leased and lesson horses is essential. Full-service board includes all items relevant to the care of a horse or pony to include an indoor stall, outdoor turn out space, bedding for each stall (changed daily) and feed (hay and grain). Boarding is a large source of revenue for equestrian facilities.
    - ii. Clients that lease or own their horse or pony provide their own tack for their animal (saddle, halters, lead ropes, saddle pads, storage trunks bridles etc.).
    - iii. Horse trainers are necessary to provide lessons to clients and the community. Horse trainers are professional riders that have transitioned into training. They are not only essential to ensuring that equestrian activities are available, but they also provide animal husbandry and ensure welfare.
    - iv. Barn assistants are also necessary to help care for the horses in terms of feeding and cleaning stalls.
    - v. Removal of waste (equine biologic waste as well as shavings from stalls) is necessary through a removal service.
  - b. What are the necessary facilities for group and/or individual riding instruction?
    - i. An outdoor riding ring is essential for riding instruction. The ring must be in an area of the property that is well drained and relatively level.
    - ii. An indoor riding arena is very much desired to ensure riding instruction can continue in inclement weather.
    - iii. Access to well groomed trails for trail rides (group or individual) is also an ideal and lovely way to make riding accessible to a variety of people, not just English style hunter/jumper and dressage riders that typically utilize indoor or outdoor riding rings.
  - c. What are the requirements and considerations required for providing horse boarding services?
    - i. Shelter-stalls within an enclosed barn that are large enough for horses to move around and lie down comfortably. On average, each horse requires 100 square feet, or a stall size of 10x12 feet for an average horse.
    - ii. Food and water: horses need access to good quality hay and grain and occasionally salt. Horses also need outdoor grazing areas such as paddocks.

- iii. Routine care: Horses need regular care including worming, dental care and foot care.
  - iv. First aid: Basic first aid supplies should be on hand and kept in good order.
  - v. Ventilation: Good air flow is essential for the comfort and health of horses, caregivers and clients.
  - vi. Manure management: There are several options for managing manure, including waste removal services and composting facilities.
  - vii. Storage: storage for farm equipment, feed and hay.
  - viii. Amenities: wash stalls for horses, tack room, indoor and outdoor riding rings/arenas, and multiple fenced in turn out areas or paddocks.
  - ix. Liability insurance needs to be maintained by licensee/lessee.
3. Best practices for operational management of a facility offering equestrian activities:
- a. What level and qualification of staff is required to maintain equestrian activities?
    - i. The staff typically consists of an Operations Director, Barn Manager, Trainer(s) and Barn staff.
      - 1. Operations Director
        - a. Dr. Lauren Talarico BS, DVM, DACVIM (Neurology, Neurosurgery) would serve in this role (the originator and preparer of this RFI).
        - b. I am a board-certified small animal and equine medical neurologist and neurosurgeon. To achieve this level of certification, you must complete 4 years of undergraduate education, 4 years of veterinary school, 1-year internal medicine and surgical internship and a 3-year residency in medical and surgical neurology. Finally, you must pass internal medicine and medical neurology/neurosurgery board certification examinations.
        - c. I have been working in private practice in Fairfax, VA for over 13 years.
        - d. I currently own 4 horses and have over 20 years of equine experience.
        - e. I have served as a board member for the Humane Rescue Alliance and Children's National Hospital (board of director's seat) in Washington, DC.
      - 2. Barn Manager
        - a. The person who is committed to this job has a master's degree in education and is a professional equestrian who has over 32 years of equine experience.

- b. She would reside on property to oversee operations as well as animal welfare/husbandry.
- 3. Trainer(s)
  - a. I intend to bring 2 professional equestrian trainers to the facility to operate the barn and business daily.
  - b. Professional equine trainers achieve this status through direct experience and horse show winnings.
- 4. Barn staff
  - a. The actual number of barn staff required to maintain an equestrian facility is directly dependent on the number of animals in the facility.
  - b. Barn staff are responsible for maintaining the day-to-day barn and horse care needs. The barn staff reports directly to the Operations Director and Head Trainer(s) and works closely with that person to ensure the ongoing health and comfort of the horses.
  - c. The barn staff tasks require an individual who has both horse knowledge and experience, preferably with all types of horses and ponies. This role also requires the individual to have experience with facilities maintenance and repairs.
  - d. Daily tasks include but not limited to visual check and feeding the entire herd a minimum of 3 times a day, administering medications, chores such as AM and PM turn out of horses, stall cleaning, prepping hay and grain, basic maintenance of the ground such as weed care and leveling of the riding rings daily.
  - e. The barn staff is also responsible for holding horses during farrier visits, dental exams, vaccines, and hand walking injured horses.
- b. Are there notable industry practices for day-to-day operations? If so, what are they?
  - i. General facility safety checks to include that all field fencing is in good order to contain animals in the pastures. Fields do not contain hazards such as fallen tree limbs or litter/trash that can become hazardous. Checking animals for overall health and no visible injury / cuts / scrapes. Ensuring grain and feeds are safely stored in airtight containers that prevent pests.
- c. What are the best approaches to additional services required such as veterinary care, farrier services, etc.?
  - i. Client owned and client leased horses provide their own veterinary care for their animal.

- ii. I, Dr. Lauren R. Talarico (the individual preparing and submitting this RFI), am a board-certified veterinary neurologist/neurosurgeon that is capable and willing to provide onsite routine and emergency veterinary care as needed for horses boarded at the Avenel Equestrian Facility.
  - iii. Veterinary care of lesson horses will be scheduled by the barn manager or provided by myself.
  - iv. Farrier services are scheduled for each animal by the barn manager. He/she is responsible for keeping track of each horse and pony's shoe rotation and schedules accordingly with our farrier.
- 4. Best practices for engaging the community in the activities offered by an equestrian facility:
  - a. What is industry best practices and strategies to promote an equestrian center within the community?
    - i. My goal is to make the Avenel Equestrian Facility the premiere horse boarding and educational facility in Montgomery County.
      - 1. Not only would we run equestrian businesses (i.e. boarding facility and lesson/show barn), but we would appeal to all sectors of the public through educational and therapeutic outreach programs.
      - 2. The goal is to make this center accessible for everyone in many ways aside from just boarding horses and private/group lessons.
      - 3. The goal is to allow people in the community to feel that the Avenel Equestrian Facility is an inclusive place that welcomes everyone of all levels and interest. It should not be viewed as a barn only accessible by people who own or have access to horses.
    - ii. The number of equestrian facilities in Montgomery County is rapidly declining. Horse owners have minimal boarding options for their horses and horse trainers are finding it difficult to sustain their businesses as people are forced to move their horses out of the county. Most of the promotion around equine sports is by word of mouth. However, the two trainers I have planned to bring with me to run the Avenel Equestrian Center have an incredibly large following of clients that are eagerly ready to participate.
    - iii. As a veterinary specialist, I have access to many colleagues in this area that have expressed interest in hosting educational seminars to children, teens and adults interested in learning about equine medicine and overall horsemanship.
    - iv. I plan to create a detailed website, social media pages and even a podcast discussing the importance of horses on agriculture and society. I also plan to hire a social media manager to consistently

- spread the word on “barn happenings” and free seminars, rides and classes for public engagement.
- v. I personally plan to give talks in schools about veterinary medicine and horsemanship to allow all children in the community to feel connected with the barn.
  - vi. I plan to coordinate school field trips to the Avenel Equestrian Facility with the surrounding public and private schools to expose children and teens to the equestrian world.
- b. Are there programs to ensure accessibility and inclusivity for diverse populations?
- i. We are firm believers that equestrian sports should be accessible for anyone interested and members of all ethnic groups. This could range from a meet and greet with a horse or a pony to full on riding lessons. The goal would be to allow lesson horses to be accessible to the public for individual and small group lessons as well as guided trail rides.
  - ii. We also plan to offer basic horse husbandry programs for all interested parties and school/community groups. This would be a wonderful way for people to get used to these amazing animals and remain in touch with nature.
  - iii. All of the educational programs I proposed in the previous section would be accessible to everyone in the community. We would ensure that each and every event was well publicized and promoted.
- c. Are there additional considerations for therapeutic riding or other types of potential offerings that provide other community benefits?
- i. We are huge proponents of therapeutic riding and have definite plans to incorporate this into the Avenel Equestrian Centers. I am a widow with three small children, two of which have extreme anxiety related to the passing of their father. Their ponies and this sport have helped them cope with the loss of their father in unimaginable ways. Horse therapy is something truly magical and I feel strongly it should be shared with the community. Whether it be mental health or a physical handicap, I am passionate about incorporating therapeutic riding into this overall plan.
- d. What types of partnerships with local organizations and schools are typical and/or recommended?
- i. Typically, local horse show organizations as well as local equestrian facilities (parks) are utilized to increase and maintain interest and a network to pool interest. It is not typical to reach out to schools directly - some examples of school interaction would be through boy or Girl Scouts of America organizations or other club interest.
  - ii. Coordination with other facilities in the area to support growing need for equestrian facilities in the area.

- e. How are appropriate fees and other charges developed for public use of the equestrian center (i.e., public riding lessons)?
    - i. Public riding lessons are billed through the trainer. On average, most trainers charge \$150/lesson which includes use of a horse/pony.
    - ii. If the client has their own horse boarded at the facility, the cost per lesson is typically \$80-100. Again, this is billed through the trainer.
  - f. What are the typical ranges for the fees associated with offerings at an equestrian center?
    - i. Full board can range anywhere from \$1400-\$1900/month/per animal. This is billed to the owner or lease of the animal.
    - ii. See above for lesson costs
5. Best practices for business terms for equestrian activities that persons or organizations offering these services may request, including but not limited to the following areas:
- a. What is the necessary length of a lease or other operating agreement to ensure the operational and financial feasibility of equestrian operations?
    - i. An initial lease term of 10-15 year lease is ideal with licensee/lessee renewal rights.
  - b. What are the best practices for ensuring that there is on-going investment in maintenance, up-keep, and improvement of facilities?
    - i. As noted above, licensee/lessee will have detailed capital improvement and maintenance plans (and accompanying budgets) in place upon commencement. Licensee/lessee might set up reserve accounts in anticipation of actual costs. Responsibility for capital improvements would be allocated between lessor and licensee/lessee per the lease based on customary allocations for leases of this type.
  - c. Are there host fees or other revenue sharing for revenues generated by the by the equestrian enterprise?
    - i. There could be commission sharing for leased or sold horses that reside on the premises. It is not typical to see revenue sharing with this type of tenancy due to the additional overhead required to operate all facets of a successful, high level equestrian facility. This could of course be reviewed and negotiated.
- 6.
- a. Are there examples of public-private partnerships for equestrian facilities and activities that serve as a potential model for future offerings?
    - i. Not that I am aware of.
  - b. What capacity do firms in this industry and/or your firm have for establishing partnerships and/or other means for raising funds for necessary repairs and maintenance of equestrian facilities?
    - i. Unfortunately, most persons interested in these types of operations tend to be individual trainers who, while incredibly experienced, do



not typically have the financial resources, or access to financial resources, to assume the financial responsibility that will be involved in operating and maintaining the facility. I am fortunate in that, in addition to having the right experience (through my trainers and me), I have the financial resources (directly or through other business relationships of mine and my late husband) to be able to take on the financial obligations that are required for this to be successful. I am very passionate about this and absolutely committed to do this.

