



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Bringing the University to You

Fact Sheet: 94-09

Suburban Horse Keeping

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Introduction

Urbanization and reduced availability of land has caused the horse owner to re-think and evaluate their horse keeping methods and programs. In the past, many horse owners lived in areas considered rural, others resided in open areas on the outskirts of a city or town. Presently, these individuals are confronted with the rapid encroachment of urbanization. Frequently they find themselves living in close proximity to a large subdivisions or in the midst of a developing Industrial Park. These changes have contributed too a loss of riding trails and arenas as well as other equestrian facilities.

Currently, about 80% of the horse population is maintained for sport, recreation or pleasure activity. Consequently, large numbers of horse owners find it necessary to adapt to keeping horses under urban or suburban conditions of limited land. Horse ownership is a continuous challenge in populated areas that were once rural.

Facilities

Changes in building codes, zoning regulations, and land use policy place constraints on horse ownership that are often difficult to reverse. Therefore, it is important that horse owners understand planned development. They need to involve themselves in land use planning with key governmental agencies to insure the horse's continued presence in urban and suburban areas. Active participation by the horse owner is the only way to insure continued horse keeping in future developments.

For those planning to purchase property for the purpose of having horses, it is important to review codes and restrictions. Horses fall into a gray area between personal pets and livestock. Depending upon property location, certain limitations on keeping horses, development, and use of property may exist.

Several types of codes and regulations should be carefully considered:

Building codes: Establish construction standards.	Zoning: Prohibits or establishes the use of property for specific uses.
Sanitation: Is concerned with public health, related pollution concerns, and pest control.	Deed restrictions: Limit property to specific uses(s).

land. Either a large or small parcel of land will work. Management in confined areas means an increase in concern for cleanliness and sanitation along with appropriate feed, health and exercise programs.

It is not necessary to base the maintenance of the urban or suburban horse solely on a given number of horses, acreage or square feet per animal. Horses are unique in their ability to adapt to various conditions. As long as there are trails, arenas, and other safe areas available where the horse can obtain adequate exercise, they require as little as 10,000 square feet (about 1/4 of an acre) for maintenance. One horse may be kept in a stall no smaller than 12' x 12', provided he has daily exercise and/or turnout in at least a 12' x 36' area. Several horses may be kept on a 1 acre facility if properly designed. However, it is important to follow other aspects of good horse husbandry. Keep in mind that the business of producing foals is not a recommended practice in a confined setting.

Sanitation

In the urban or suburban setting, a "good neighbor" in horse keeping must have an appropriate sanitation and hygiene program to control dust, odor and pests. Thoroughly clean stalls, paddocks, and the general premises and remove and properly dispose of all debris on a daily basis.

A 1,000 pound horse will produce 44 to 45 pounds of manure daily, excluding bedding. That's 8 to 10 tons in a year! For this reason, it is important to develop and implement a system for collection, temporary storage, and removal.

A good sanitation program is important to maintain the health of your horse(s). It also helps to keep the neighbors happy, as it reduces dust, flies, and odors. You will probably spend 20-30 minutes daily per horse in order to keep your facilities properly cleaned.

There are several species of flies that must be controlled. Horse flies feed and lay their eggs in waste matter such as manure, bedding, wet feed, and other decomposing materials. Stable flies lay their eggs in horse manure and piles of plant matter in decomposition. Flies are difficult to control. The control of flies on horse operations is based upon:

Reduction of natural fly attractants

- Elimination of breeding areas
- Chemical control
- Biological control
- Avoid accumulations of manure, bedding, and feed with water. Insure there are no leaks in the water system and avoid long standing water conditions.

Rodent control is another important aspect of sanitation. Mice and rats should be controlled through appropriate feed storage, general cleaning, traps, and baits. These vermin can cause several health problems.

Feeding

Feeding the urban or suburban horse is no different from horses kept elsewhere. However, they are usually maintained for pleasure or recreational activity and are not worked hard in most cases. Feed consumption will be about 2.0 to 2.50% of body weight. A 1,000 pound horse will usually eat around 20 to 25 pounds of feed daily. The diet will be primarily -alfalfa, grass, or oat hay. A nutritional supplement may be necessary in certain instances. This could be in the form of corn, oats or barley. Some may prefer a complex commercial sweet feed composed of several grains, minerals and vitamins. Such mixes are usually fed at the rate of 3 to 5 pounds per day.

All feeds in the diet should be good quality and free of molds or weather damage. Lawn clippings are not recommended as they could cause colic and various metabolic problems. Horses should be fed 2 or

3 times daily at approximately the same time. Have clean, fresh water available on a free-choice basis. Feed minerals and vitamins as needed. Always provide a salt block for your horse.

Because urban or suburban horse keeping generally occurs on small land parcels, adequate storage for feed and supplies is minimal. This often results in the urban owner purchasing feeds and supplies in small amounts more frequently. For these reasons, costs of feed and supplies may exceed other areas where additional storage is available.

In addition to feed, other readily-available resources include tack stores, farrier services, and veterinary care, remember, the urban or suburban horse has the same basic requirements for a quality life as do other horses.

Summary

Factors to consider

- Stabling areas for horses require careful planing, proper construction and maintenance. In addition, the urban or suburban horse owner should maintain good community relations to preserve their right to keep horses.
- Maintain facilities according to local codes and aesthetic standards.
- Control dust, odors, flies, parasites and rodents.
- Properly dispose of all chemicals, pesticides and other such products using approved practices.
- Provide for sanitary manure collection and removal.
- Prevent ground water contamination to avoid "downstream" pollution and health concerns.
- Provide adequate fire protection.
- Provide safety for general public.
- Post signs indicating potential risk(s) involved with horses.
- Keep horses healthy.

References

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