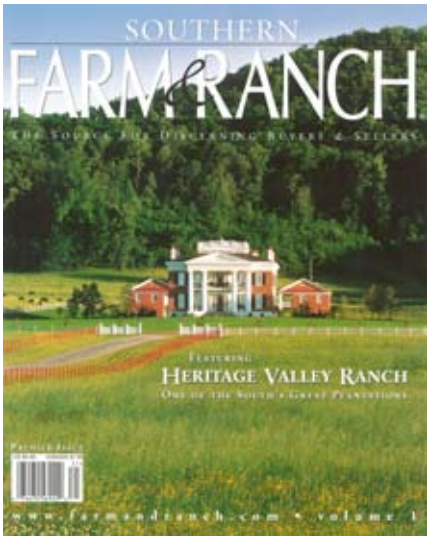
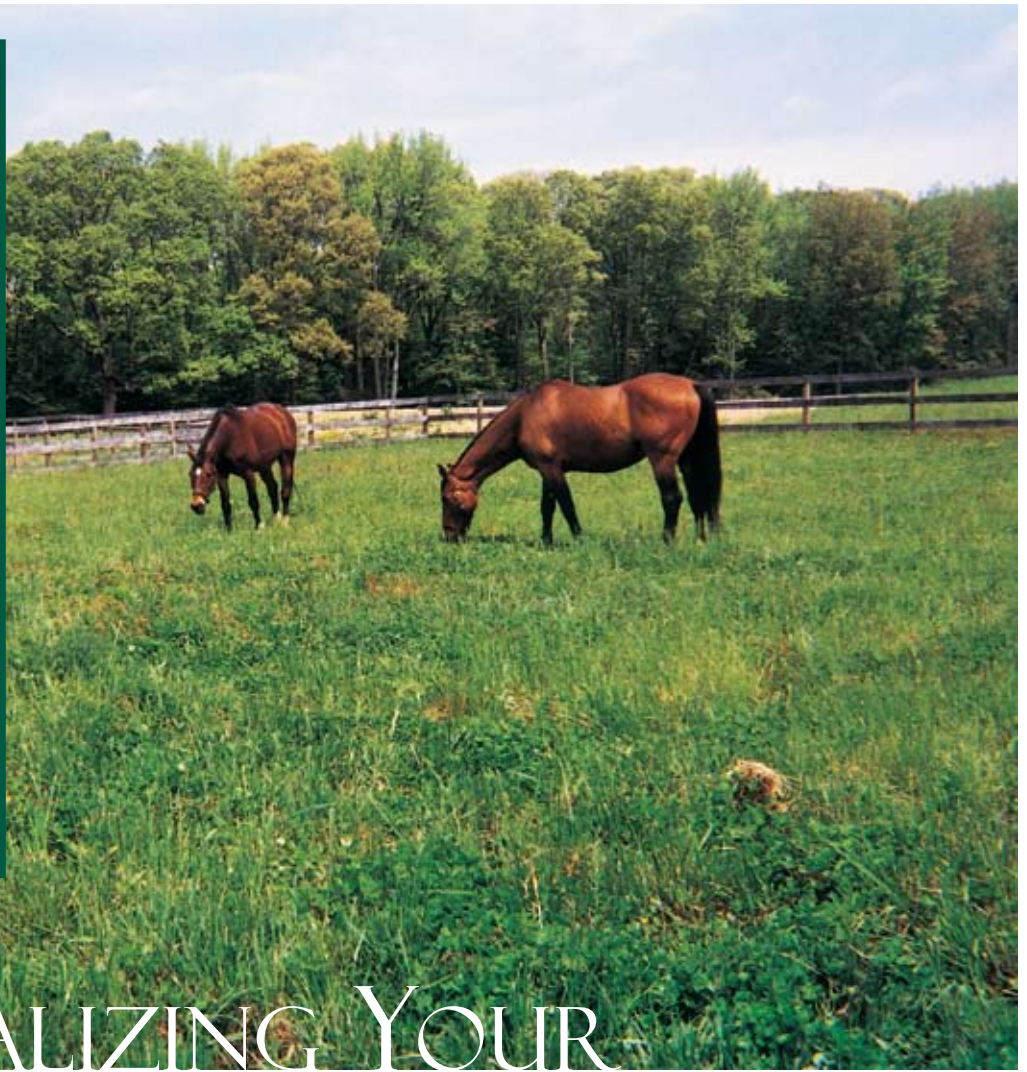




**EQUESTRIAN**  
SERVICES, LLC  
*as seen in*



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# REALIZING YOUR

## *Equestrian Dreams*

ESCAPE THE  
HUSTLE AND BUSTLE  
OF CITY LIFE AND  
FIND A LITTLE PIECE  
OF HEAVEN  
TO CALL YOUR OWN.

There is something calming and graceful about looking out one's window onto lush green pastures dotted with horses grazing. Many of us are looking to escape the hustle and bustle of city life and find a little piece of heaven to call our own. If you are in the market for rural real estate with dreams of having horses, you are pursuing an admirable goal - helping preserve the open space. However, there are important points to consider. Even a lifetime spent with horses may not prepare you for the multitude of issues associated with creating a functional and aesthetically pleasing equestrian facility. From the outset, as you begin to look at properties, here are a few questions to keep in mind. What were the previous uses of the properties? You do not want any unexpected surprises to turn up in the "back forty" - or in your well water. Are there any environmentally sensitive areas on the land? The county will not be very supportive if you need to cross a seasonal wetland to go from your barn to your outdoor riding ring. For that matter, how will

the county view your operation - gentleman farmer, boarding barn, professional training facility? Is the land zoned to support that use? Counties often require licenses or permits to approve certain equestrian uses; others may require special zoning exceptions.

If a piece of property that has caught your eye has passed this preliminary evaluation, then the fun, and the real work, can begin.

What does owning a horse farm mean to you? Now is the time to fully explore your dreams: a seven-stall barn with a fully equipped tack room for you and your daughter to train your Warmbloods in dressage; an Olympic quality arena nestled back in the woods with independently fenced paddocks allowing individual turnout for your horses, with a groomed and fenced gallop around the property; perhaps low maintenance fencing surrounding a large-acreage ranch for you to gallop across with your horses and graze your cattle; or a 50-stall boarding and training complex with

a spacious indoor arena and multiple outdoor rings - a facility your European trainer would have to come over to run. You might want a rustic barn and corrals set in a mountain meadow where you tie riding trails into an existing alpine network. These are all wonderful ideas and concepts, and all have very different land requirements and design considerations.

Clearly not all horse facilities will work on all properties. Riding rings and arenas are more easily situated on relatively level ground. Riding mountain trails is very different than riding in open meadows. And of course, the more horses you plan to have, the more land you will need - 2 acres per horse is a good rule of thumb for maintaining proper pastures. You will need to refine your search down to the properties that could possibly encompass your desired facility.

As your search narrows, one criterion in the selection process will be - How do the

elements I want included on my farm fit onto the property? This can be as much of a challenge for the 1,000-acre ranch in Montana as for the 25-acre farm in Virginia.

Horse farms all involve work. The ease with which that work can be performed relates directly to how much time you will have to enjoy your horses and how much effort will be expended to keep your property well maintained. How far will the barn be from the manure storage bin and the bedding shed? How close are the pastures for turnout? Where is a convenient place to park the trailer? Do the vet, the farrier and the feed truck have easy access to the barn - even in bad weather? Where will the tractor and the Polaris be parked - and how big does that shed need to be? The juxtaposition of these and other key elements will determine how smoothly activities will flow on your property.

Furthermore, people generally don't live in their barns. Where will your home site be in relation to the barn? For some, being able to stroll off the back patio to greet their horses each morning is a dream come true. For others, a busy barn is a dusty, noisy place and they want to be able to retire to the quiet sanctuary of their home just across the way. These are items you should consider carefully during your planning process.

Sooner or later (and preferably sooner) you will need to examine your dreams under the sometimes





commercial operations - regardless of their size.

Prior to visiting the local municipality, it is important to have all of your ideas sketched out, both literally and figuratively. You do not have to build it all now - or ever - but the county will appreciate seeing the full extent of your dreams up front. At this preliminary stage you will get a pretty good idea what will be approved easily and what may take a bit more grease. You can then modify your plans (or your approach) to move closer to what the county wants to see and ultimately to the

permits to build your facility.

If this all sounds daunting, that's because it is, but there is help available. Full service equestrian consulting firms like ours, Equestrian Services, LLC, based in Annapolis, Maryland, offer clients assistance with each of

harsh light of reality - the local municipal government. On the bright side, in this age of overwhelming development, many local governments actively support the preservation of open space or farmland through the creation of equestrian facilities. Staff members, while often overworked, usually want to help landowners achieve their goals. On the other hand, there can still be a frustrating number of rules, regulations, codes, setbacks, permits, licenses, exceptions and variances that must be followed, obtained and granted. In helping our clients through the permitting approval process, we have found that perception and education are often key elements to success. For example, the word "arena" may conjure up images of a 25,000-seat sports arena in the minds of planning and zoning staff. By substituting the word

"ring," everyone's blood pressure drops markedly. The eastern region of the United States has seen a dramatic increase in the number of indoor riding "rings" being built for private use. We are still helping to educate people that these are not



the steps outlined above. From help in selecting an appropriate piece of property, to planning out the design elements, to working with county personnel on permits and approvals, our goal is to facilitate and simplify the process for



our clients. Some firms, including ours, offer additional services. For example, we can help you create a budget, provide design and layout of your facility, offer project management services, help you select appropriate contractors, introduce you to new and innovative equestrian products for your barn, design and install your paddocks, riding rings and trails. Essentially we offer a full range of

services from consultation to a turnkey operation. However you choose to proceed, taking the time to thoroughly plan the scope of your project and evaluate your options before you start building, while working within the regulatory framework of your local municipality, will streamline the entire process and produce a facility that most closely embodies your dreams.

## HAPPY HUNTING AND HAPPY TRAILS!

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## MEASURING UP: CHOOSING AN EQUESTRIAN CONSULTANT

One should follow several guidelines when selecting an equestrian consulting firm. The consultant should:

- (1) have decades of experience caring for horses themselves
- (2) actively maintain a presence in a barn to keep a fresh, knowledgeable perspective
- (3) have a good working knowledge of topography, grading, drainage issues and soil composition
- (4) have a design and construction background
- (5) keep up on the latest trends for all riding disciplines and other accoutrements for horses
- (6) have the ability to work with county agencies and local government jurisdictions effectively.

Even if you own your own horses now, chances are an additional perspective on designing your farm will pay off in the long run.