

EMA

Equine Massage Academy Ltd

Therapy Education Research

Better Yard Care – Simple Steps to Improve Welfare and Standards



Running or being part of a livery yard comes with shared responsibility. The small, everyday decisions made on a yard can have a significant impact on horse health, welfare, and disease risk.

The good news?

You don't need to overhaul everything—**consistent, practical habits make the biggest difference.**

What Good Yard Management Really Looks Like

Good yard management isn't just about keeping things tidy—it's about:


- Protecting horse health
- Reducing risk of illness and injury
- Creating a calm, safe environment
- Setting a consistent standard others follow
- Not only have a great contract in place but excellent yard rules (see attached download)

Whether you're a yard owner or a livery client, you can influence standards every day.

Practical Steps You Can Implement Immediately


Hygiene & Biosecurity

- Wash or sanitise hands between handling different horses
- Avoid sharing equipment (or disinfect between uses)
- Keep water sources clean and avoid cross-contamination
- Isolate new or returning horses where possible

 These small habits significantly reduce the spread of illness on busy yards.

Horse-to-Horse Interaction

- Be mindful of nose-to-nose contact over fences when health is unknown
- Avoid mixing unfamiliar horses unnecessarily
- Monitor herd dynamics for stress or bullying

 Not all risks are obvious—close contact is one of the biggest.

Turnout & Paddock Awareness

- Rotate grazing where possible
- Avoid overstocking fields and maintain good-quality grazing
- Be aware of poaching and ground conditions

 Land management plays a direct role in both health and injury prevention.

Movement on and off the Yard

- Be cautious when horses travel to events and return
- Change clothing/footwear after attending other yards

- Monitor horses closely after travel

👉 Many issues are brought onto yards without owners realising.

Yard Changes, Standards, and the Impact on Your Horse

It's not uncommon for owners to move from yard to yard in search of something better—often due to standards slipping, management inconsistencies, or frustration with how things are run.

But something that's often overlooked is the impact this can have on the horse.

Every time a horse moves:

- They must adjust to a new environment
- Integrate into a new herd and social structure
- Learn new routines and expectations
- Re-establish their sense of security

For many horses, this can be **stressful and destabilising**, particularly when it happens more than once. It's not so different from a child changing schools—just as they begin to settle, build relationships, and feel secure, everything changes again.

Before You Move... Consider This

Of course, sometimes moving yards is the right decision.

But if things “aren't quite right,” it's worth asking:

- Is this something that could be improved with better management practices?
- Is there an opportunity to have a constructive conversation with the yard owner or manager?
- Could small, informed changes make a big difference to both horse welfare and your experience?

Often, the issue isn't just the yard—it's a lack of clear knowledge, structure, or consistency.

Be Part of the Solution

Yards don't improve by chance—they improve when people:

- Understand what good management really looks like
- Feel confident to communicate effectively
- Work collaboratively to raise standards


By increasing your knowledge, you're in a far stronger position to:

- Advocate for your horse

- Support better practices
- Help create a more positive environment for everyone

Daily Observation

- Notice subtle changes
- Don't ignore "minor" signs—they often aren't
- Act early rather than waiting

 Early recognition is one of the most important welfare tools you have.

What Many People Don't Realise

Even well-run yards can have hidden risks—often due to a lack of clear protocols and a gradual decline in standards.

Shared spaces, inconsistent routines, and small oversights can quietly increase risk over time.

Standards don't slip overnight—they slip through small, repeated compromises.

Leading by Example

You don't have to own the yard to make a difference.

By:

- Following good practice consistently
- Encouraging others positively
- Taking responsibility for your own horse's management

You help create a yard culture that prioritises welfare, professionalism, and prevention.

Want to Take This Further?

If you'd like to develop a deeper understanding and apply these principles with confidence then consider our bite size no work courses with plenty of learning that will benefit any horse on a private or shared yard:

- **Paddock Management for Equestrian Use** [LINK](#)
Learn how to manage grazing, rotation, land use, soil, pasture quality and much more to support horse health long-term.
- **Equine Biosecurity Best Practice Protocols** [LINK](#)
Understand how disease spreads, how to prevent it, and how to implement practical, effective protocols on any yard.
- **Equine Emergency First Aid** [LINK](#)
Be prepared if an emergency happens and learn how to correctly monitor

horse health, including taking and recording vital signs to establish healthy baselines.

- **Optimum Management For Travelling Horses – Certificate of Competency** [LINK](#)

Protect horse welfare during travel and improve recovery, performance, and risk awareness—many issues occur during transport that go unnoticed.

These courses are designed to give you **real-world, applicable knowledge**—so you can protect your horse and contribute to higher standards on any yard you're part of.

💬 **Final Thought**

Good yard management isn't complicated—but it *does* require awareness and consistency.

The people who make the biggest difference are the ones who **notice more, understand more, and act sooner**. All of this goes a long way to helping keep your horse happy and healthy!

Now you're truly helping your horse and others!!

Our courses are approved by:

