

# Spring 2015 Fees Survey

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**F**arm and stable owners are always trying to determine how to set fees that are not only fair and equitable to clients, but profitable to their equine businesses. We asked horse farm/stable owners, managers and Certified Horsemanship Association riding instructors to respond to a survey to help our readers understand the services offered in our industry and the fees charged for these services. We appreciate everyone who took part in the survey!

We know that boarding stables and farms offer the opportunity for people to own horses—or ride horses—when they don't own a farm or ranch. No one knows how many boarding farms there are in the United States, but based on industry experience, we are assuming that many more people have horses boarded than own farms to keep them.

So what does it cost to board a horse? We searched the

Internet and found answers from university websites to horse industry forums. The range seemed to run from \$100 per month for not-so-nice pasture to \$1,500 per month in some of the Northeastern stables with full care and fancy accouterments.

It also seemed that geographic location and the services each stable/farm provided in exchange for the board payment were key in determining the price. Of course, supply and demand are at work, and in an area where there are more people who want to board horses than there are facilities, the price probably would be higher.

Because stable and farm owners want to be reasonable, but need to make a living in order to keep their facilities open to the public, and because the topic of “fees” is always popular on our online forums, *Stable Management* got feedback on the fees charged and the services for which they are charged. The responses were as follows.

## Full Board

Simply saying that your stable provides “full board” doesn't define all the jobs, caretaking, instruction and facilities that are available to the boarders. So we asked in our survey what people included in full board. Interestingly, full board doesn't always mean a stall is included! When determining fees in your area, it would probably be good to call around to other stables to see what they are charging and what they provide. If a potential customer comes to you and says that Smith Stable is offering full board for \$350/month and your full board is \$550/month, figure out what the other stable is offering (or not including). Maybe the other stable's full board doesn't include feed or hay.

### What do you include in full board?

| Service/Amenity                 | Percent Include in Full Board |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Hay .....                       | 95.7%                         |
| Stall.....                      | 94.4%                         |
| Outdoor arena .....             | 89.9%                         |
| Bedding.....                    | 88.4%                         |
| Bring in/turn out.....          | 85.8%                         |
| Feed .....                      | 81.2%                         |
| Pasture .....                   | 77.4%                         |
| Adding supplements to feed..... | 73.9%                         |

|                               |       |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Blanketing .....              | 57.3% |
| Trails.....                   | 52.4% |
| Indoor arena.....             | 48.9% |
| Scheduling vet/farrier.....   | 48.7% |
| Holding for vet/farrier ..... | 44.9% |
| Grooming .....                | 6.2%  |
| Trailerling.....              | 3.5%  |

### Other full board amenities/services included:

- Tack Room
- Wash stall
- Hot walker
- Cleaning stall
- 1 hour of equine exercise/week
- Care of sick/injured horses
- Lessons
- Giving medications
- Special feeding
- Minor vet care
- Outdoor shelter
- Deworming
- On-site instructor
- Picking hooves
- Cross-country course
- Trailer parking
- Round pen
- Fly spray
- Heated water
- Turn out/bring in
- Putting on fly masks/fly spray
- Recordkeeping
- Sheath cleaning
- Group lesson

What are people charging for full board? Again, the range is quite large based on what is offered. It seems the majority of farms offer hay as part of the full board agreement, and pricing from \$251-\$500 is the most common for either type of full board that includes feed and/or hay. Following you will see full board with three different sets of services provided.

### Full board cost per month (with stall, daily care, feed, bedding and hay)

| Board/Month                     | Percent Response |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Under \$250.....                | 6.7%             |
| \$251-500.....                  | 55.5%            |
| \$501-\$750.....                | 21.3%            |
| \$751-\$1,500.....              | 6.5%             |
| More than \$1,500.....          | 0.5%             |
| We don't offer this option..... | 9.4%             |

### Full board cost per month (not including feed)

| Board/Month                     | Percent Response |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Under \$250.....                | 11.6%            |
| \$251-500.....                  | 26.9%            |
| \$501-\$750.....                | 3.4%             |
| \$751-\$1,500.....              | 1.3%             |
| More than \$1,500.....          | 0.5%             |
| We don't offer this option..... | 9.4%             |

### Full board cost per month (not including feed or hay)

| Board/Month                     | Percent Response |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Under \$250.....                | 18.4%            |
| \$251-500.....                  | 16.5%            |
| \$501-\$750.....                | 2.2%             |
| \$751-\$1,500.....              | 0.9%             |
| More than \$1,500.....          | 0.3%             |
| We don't offer this option..... | 61.7%            |

## Partial Care Board

If you think it was difficult to determine what full board meant in the industry, the segment of the farms/stables providing “partial care” board offered an even wider array of services depending on the facility. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that they did not offer partial care board. For those that did offer it, many indicated that some of these services were available to customers with a fee attached.

### What do you include in partial board?

| Service/Amenity                 | Percent Include in Partial Board |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Pasture.....                    | 52.0%                            |
| Stall.....                      | 44.9%                            |
| Hay.....                        | 38.9%                            |
| Trails.....                     | 29.8%                            |
| Bring in/turn out.....          | 29.3%                            |
| Indoor arena.....               | 29.3%                            |
| Bedding.....                    | 28.8%                            |
| Feed.....                       | 24.7%                            |
| Adding supplements to feed..... | 21.2%                            |
| Scheduling vet/farrier.....     | 20.2%                            |

|                              |       |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Holding for vet/farrier..... | 19.7% |
| Blanketing.....              | 18.2% |
| Outdoor arena.....           | 9.0%  |
| Grooming.....                | 2.5%  |
| Trailing.....                | 1.5%  |

### Other amenities/services that were provided in some partial board were:

- Feeding one time a day
- One lesson per week
- Outdoor shelter
- Round pen
- Deworming
- Feeding twice a day
- Minor vet care
- Trailer parking
- Wash rack
- Cleaning stall

### Partial board cost per month (includes hay)

| Board/Month            | Percent Response |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Under \$250.....       | 14.1%            |
| \$251-500.....         | 25.4%            |
| \$501-\$750.....       | 1.0%             |
| \$751-\$1,500.....     | 1.0%             |
| More than \$1,500..... | 0.0%             |
| We don't offer it..... | 58.4%            |

### Partial board cost per month (does NOT include hay)

| Board/Month            | Percent Response |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Under \$250.....       | 21.7%            |
| \$251-500.....         | 10.8%            |
| \$501-\$750.....       | 0.4%             |
| \$751-\$1,500.....     | 0.4%             |
| More than \$1,500..... | 0.0%             |
| We don't offer it..... | 66.8%            |

## Pasture Board

This is a common type of board where it is generally thought that someone does not get a stall, provides his or her own care and feeding, and the farm/stable owner has little to no physical demands or requirements to care for these horses. However, based on the survey, this isn't necessarily true. Facility owners/managers are spending quite a bit of time and on these supposedly “lower-end” clients.



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**What do you include in pasture board?**

| Service/Amenity                    | Percent Include in Pasture Board |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Run-in shed .....                  | 70.0%                            |
| Pasture (1+ acres per horse) ..... | 63.4%                            |
| Hay .....                          | 63.0%                            |

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Outdoor arena .....                        | 59.9% |
| Trails .....                               | 45.8% |
| Feed .....                                 | 39.6% |
| Scheduling vet/farrier .....               | 33.5% |
| Indoor arena .....                         | 32.2% |
| Holding for vet/farrier .....              | 27.3% |
| Adding supplements to feed .....           | 26.0% |
| Pasture (less than 1 acre per horse) ..... | 24.2% |
| Blanketing .....                           | 19.4% |
| Bring in/turn out .....                    | 11.0% |
| Stall .....                                | 8.4%  |
| Bedding .....                              | 7.5%  |
| Grooming .....                             | 2.2%  |

**Other amenities/services that were provided were:**

- Lessons
- Round pen
- Apply fly spray (provided by owner)
- Deworming
- Wash rack
- Stalls available for medical needs

**Pasture board cost per month (includes hay)**

| Board/Month             | Percent Response |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Under \$250 .....       | 23.7%            |
| \$251-500 .....         | 32.6%            |
| \$501-\$750 .....       | 2.6%             |
| \$751-\$1,500 .....     | 0.3%             |
| More than \$1,500 ..... | 0.0%             |
| We don't offer it ..... | 40.8%            |





### Pasture board cost per month (does NOT include hay)

| Board/Month            | Percent Response |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Under \$250.....       | 21.9%            |
| \$251-500.....         | 8.5%             |
| \$501-\$750.....       | 0.0%             |
| \$751-\$1,500.....     | 0.4%             |
| More than \$1,500..... | 0.0%             |
| We don't offer it..... | 69.3%            |

### Other Services and Fees

As you can see from the survey results, the terms “full board,” “partial board” and “pasture board” are not consistent when you look at the services offered. We wanted to know which services were being offered at a charge. This might give you some idea of what you should add to your facility's *a la carte* services menu, and what you might charge for those services. For example, if you charged \$1 for putting on or taking off blankets instead of doing it for free, and you had 20 boarders who blanketed one time a day for half of the year, that could bring in an additional \$3,650 per year for work you are giving away now! If you charged \$5 for that daily service for those same boarders, that would be an additional \$18,250 per year!

If other facilities in your area are charging a fee for specific services and you aren't, that might endear your boarders to you, but it also might mean that you are undervaluing your time and facilities. Again, this might be a way to help your boarders understand your fee schedule and what you do and don't include in your board rates.

### What other services do you offer for a fee, and in what range do you charge for EACH TIME you provide the service? (The percentage of respondents is listed under each category.)

| Service               | Free  | \$1-\$5 | \$6-\$10 | \$11 or more |
|-----------------------|-------|---------|----------|--------------|
| Blanketing/fly masks  | 67.0% | 26.6%   | 3.9%     | 2.5%         |
| Bandaging/medications | 35.3% | 37.0%   | 22.2%    | 11.9%        |
| Feeding               | 87.2% | 8.3%    | 2.6%     | 1.9%         |
| Lessons (people)      | 0.9%  | 0.0%    | 1.3%     | 97.9%        |

|  |       |       |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Training (horses)                          | 0.9%  | 0.0%  | 1.4%  | 97.6% |
| Turn out/bring in                          | 87.6% | 9.0%  | 1.9%  | 1.5%  |
| Feed supplements                           | 80.0% | 12.6% | 1.8%  | 5.6%  |
| Scheduling/attending<br>vet/farrier visits | 58.4% | 8.5%  | 16.4% | 13.7% |
| Trailer (to show, etc.)                    | 4.6%  | 0.0%  | 3.2%  | 92.2% |
| Deworming                                  | 29.5% | 15.1% | 26.3% | 29.1% |
| Vaccinations                               | 17.9% | 9.5%  | 13.7% | 58/9% |

### Other amenities/services that were provided for an additional fee were:

- Massage services
- Horse camps
- Fans
- Dentist
- Cleaning run-in sheds
- Ground training
- Extra stall time
- Clinics
- Hoof care
- Bandaging
- Exercising horses
- Pony parties
- Auto fly spray
- Cleaning stalls
- Grooming
- Clipping
- Bathing
- Sheath cleaning
- Alternative therapies

### Riding Instructors (Training Humans)

Offering riding instruction is a good profit center for many horse farms and stables. Many facilities maintain school horses and offer lessons to those who do not own horses, and other facilities offer lessons to their boarders using the owners' private horses. We also discovered in this survey that nearly 70% of riding instructors were also the owners of the facilities. We asked the instructors about their situations, services and pricing.

Riding instructors might also keep in mind that other types of service providers who teach privately (music lessons, for example) are going to a monthly fee (paid all at once) with some sort of make-up policy if the student misses a lesson. In this survey we find out that more than 90% of riding instructors charge per lesson rather than per month. Having a monthly payment schedule and a set rule about missed lessons could help riding lessons become a more profitable area of your business.

### Are you the only instructor at the facility?

| Response  | Percent of Respondents |
|-----------|------------------------|
| Yes ..... | 58.6%                  |
| No.....   | 41.4%                  |

### How many instructors are there at the facility?

| Response       | Percent of Respondents |
|----------------|------------------------|
| 1.....         | 55.8%                  |
| 2.....         | 18.9%                  |
| 3 or more..... | 25.3%                  |

### Do you give lessons at more than 1 facility?

| Response                        | Percent of Respondents |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Yes, 2 facilities .....         | 11.7%                  |
| Yes, 3 or more facilities ..... | 14.3%                  |
| No, just 1 facility .....       | 74.0%                  |

### Do you teach private (1 person), semi-private (2 people) or group lessons (3 or more people)?

| Response                      | Percent of Respondents |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Private and semi-private..... | 42.2%                  |
| Private and group .....       | 28.3%                  |
| Only private.....             | 23.9%                  |
| Semi-private and group.....   | 4.3%                   |
| Only semi-private.....        | 0.9%                   |
| Only group .....              | 0.4%                   |

### Do you charge by the lesson or by the month?

| Response            | Percent of Respondents |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| By the lesson ..... | 91.8%                  |
| By the month.....   | 8.2%                   |

### How long are your lessons?

| Response                   | Percent of Respondents |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| More than 1 hour .....     | 9.5%                   |
| 1 hour.....                | 58.0%                  |
| 50 minutes.....            | 6.1%                   |
| 45 minutes.....            | 16.5%                  |
| Less than 45 minutes ..... | 2.2%                   |

Many instructors noted that the lesson time varied depending on the experience of the person being taught and whether there were problems that needed to be addressed.

### What do you charge for PRIVATE lessons?

| Response                    | Percent of Respondents |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| \$30 or less per hour.....  | 16.2%                  |
| \$31-\$40 per hour.....     | 26.2%                  |
| \$41-\$50 per hour.....     | 27.1%                  |
| \$51-\$60 per hour.....     | 18.3%                  |
| \$61-\$70 per hour.....     | 6.6%                   |
| \$71-\$80 per hour.....     | 4.8%                   |
| \$81-\$90.....              | 0.4%                   |
| \$91 or more per hour ..... | 0.4%                   |

### What do you charge for SEMI-PRIVATE lessons?

| Response                   | Percent of Respondents |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| \$30 or less per hour..... | 33.0%                  |

|                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| \$31-\$40 per hour.....     | 32.4% |
| \$41-\$50 per hour.....     | 23.8% |
| \$51-\$60 per hour.....     | 5.9%  |
| \$61-\$70 per hour.....     | 2.2%  |
| \$71-\$80 per hour.....     | 1.6%  |
| \$81-\$90.....              | 1.1%  |
| \$91 or more per hour ..... | 0.0%  |

### What do you charge for GROUP lessons?

| Response                    | Percent of Respondents |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| \$30 or less per hour.....  | 46.1%                  |
| \$31-\$40 per hour.....     | 27.0%                  |
| \$41-\$50 per hour.....     | 16.4%                  |
| \$51-\$60 per hour.....     | 7.2%                   |
| \$61-\$70 per hour.....     | 1.3%                   |
| \$71-\$80 per hour.....     | 1.3%                   |
| \$81-\$90.....              | 0.0%                   |
| \$91 or more per hour ..... | 0.7%                   |

Clinics are popular ways to either give students more time with you, offer your services to students who don't take regular lessons, or focus on a specific area of interest. However, many instructors are not giving clinics.

### Do you give clinics at your primary facility?

| Response  | Percent of Respondents |
|-----------|------------------------|
| Yes ..... | 38.8%                  |
| No.....   | 61.3%                  |

### Do you give clinics somewhere other than your primary facility?

| Response  | Percent of Respondents |
|-----------|------------------------|
| Yes ..... | 27.5%                  |
| No.....   | 72.5%                  |

### Do you own the primary facility?

| Response  | Percent of Respondents |
|-----------|------------------------|
| Yes ..... | 67.5%                  |
| No.....   | 32.5%                  |

### What do you charge for a clinic?

| Response                    | Percent of Respondents |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| \$50 or less per day.....   | 20.3%                  |
| \$51-\$100 per day.....     | 34.1%                  |
| \$101-150 per day.....      | 11.4%                  |
| \$151-\$200 per day .....   | 10.6%                  |
| \$201-\$250 per day .....   | 3.3%                   |
| \$251-\$300 per day .....   | 6.5%                   |
| \$301 or more per day ..... | 13.8%                  |

### Do you train horses?

| Response                                   | Percent of Respondents |
|--|------------------------|
| Yes, often.....                            | 29.2%                  |
| Yes, sometimes .....                       | 40.7%                  |
| Only when my students' horses need it..... | 14.4%                  |
| No, I only instruct humans .....           | 15.7%                  |

## Are you certified as a riding instructor? (Please mark all that apply.)

| Response            | Percent of Respondents |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| CHA .....           | 26.7%                  |
| USDF .....          | 12.9%                  |
| PATH .....          | 7.9%                   |
| BHS (British) ..... | 7.9%                   |
| USHJA .....         | 6.9%                   |
| ARIA .....          | 5.0%                   |
| AAHS .....          | 1.0%                   |
| HAS .....           | 1.0%                   |

There were nearly 50 responses for “other” types of certification, ranging from graduating from a recognized college or university equine program to Parelli certification to Centered Riding.

## How long have you been actively involved in the equine industry?

| Response                 | Percent of Respondents |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 10 years or less .....   | 12.7%                  |
| 11-20 years .....        | 19.8%                  |
| 21-30 years .....        | 19.8%                  |
| More than 30 years ..... | 47.8%                  |

For those who said the farm/stable was their primary source of income, nearly 70% had been in the business for more than 20 years, and 47.2% more than 30 years! This again points to an experience, yet aging, group who make up the core of the boarding farm businesses surveyed.

## How long have you worked for or owned your current equine business?

| Response                 | Percent of Respondents |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Less than 5 years .....  | 20.1%                  |
| 6-10 years .....         | 22.9%                  |
| 11-20 years .....        | 28.8%                  |
| More than 20 years ..... | 28.2%                  |

## Where is your business located?

| Response                          | Percent of Respondents |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Midwest .....                     | 25.5%                  |
| Northeast .....                   | 19.7%                  |
| Southeast .....                   | 16.3%                  |
| Canada .....                      | 8.9%                   |
| Southwest .....                   | 8.0%                   |
| Mid-Atlantic .....                | 6.2%                   |
| Pacific Northwest .....           | 5.5%                   |
| Rocky Mountains .....             | 4.3%                   |
| Southern/Central California ..... | 2.5%                   |
| Northern California .....         | 2.2%                   |
| Outside North America .....       | 0.9%                   |

## What is the PRIMARY area of focus for your business (your top money-maker)?

| Response       | Percent of Respondents |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Boarding ..... | 52.9%                  |
| Lessons .....  | 24.2%                  |
| Training ..... | 5.8%                   |
| Breeding ..... | 3.4%                   |

|                              |      |
|------------------------------|------|
| Competitions/events .....    | 3.4% |
| Trail riding .....           | 2.1% |
| Therapeutic riding .....     | 1.2% |
| Clinics .....                | 0.6% |
| Camp programs .....          | 0.3% |
| Other (please specify) ..... | 6.1% |

Many “other” responses came from the businesses of rescue or rehab facilities, or a fairly equal combination of the top money-makers listed above.

## What services are provided in your business? (Each respondent selected the top 3 services that he or she provided, with the aggregate score used for the results.)

| What services are provided in your business? (each respondent selected the top three services, with the aggregate score used for the results) |
|---|
| 1. Boarding   |
| 2. Lessons  |
| 3. Training   |
| 4. Trail Riding   |
| 5. Competitions/Events  |
| 6. Clinics  |
| 7. Breeding   |
| 8. Camp Programs  |
| 9. Therapeutic Riding   |

Other services included rescue or rehab facilities, retirement homes and horse sales.

## What are the top disciplines of your business? (Each respondent selected his or her top 3 disciplines, with the aggregate score used for the results.)

|                                 |
|---------------------------------|
| 1. Recreational/Arena Rider     |
| 2. Dressage                     |
| 3. Trail Rider                  |
| 4. Hunters/Jumpers              |
| 5. Western Pleasure             |
| 6. English Pleasure             |
| 7. Eventing                     |
| 8. Roping/Cutting/Barrel Racing |
| 9. Driving                      |
| 10. Saddle Seat                 |
| 11. Endurance                   |

Other responses included vaulting, reining, natural horsemanship, racing and cattle work.

## What is your age?

| Response             | Percent of Respondents |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Under 30 years ..... | 7.7%                   |
| 31-40 years .....    | 11.0%                  |
| 41-50 years .....    | 25.2%                  |
| 51-60 years .....    | 33.1%                  |
| Over 60 years .....  | 23.0%                  |

## What is the highest level of education you have completed?

| Response          | Percent of Respondents |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| High school ..... | 20.2%                  |

|                        |       |
|------------------------|-------|
| College .....          | 58.0% |
| Master's degree.....   | 17.2% |
| Doctorate degree ..... | 4.6%  |

### Is your equine business your primary or secondary means of income?

| Response        | Percent of Respondents |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| Primary .....   | 38.8%                  |
| Secondary ..... | 61.2%                  |

### If you said SECONDARY income in the previous question, what percent of your yearly earnings comes from your equine business?

| Response            | Percent of Respondents |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Less than 25% ..... | 68.0%                  |
| 26-49% .....        | 27.0%                  |
| 50-74% .....        | 4.0%                   |
| 75-100% .....       | 1.0%                   |

### What is the average yearly income of your entire equine business?

| Response                 | Percent of Respondents |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Under \$50,000.....      | 58.5%                  |
| \$51,000-\$99,999.....   | 15.2%                  |
| \$100,000-\$149,999..... | 7.7%                   |
| \$150,000-\$199,999..... | 2.5%                   |
| \$200,000-\$399,999..... | 2.8%                   |
| More than \$400,000..... | 2.5%                   |
| Decline to answer .....  | 10.8%                  |

### How many employees are there at your facility?

| Response          | Percent of Respondents |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Just me.....      | 44.6%                  |
| Fewer than 5..... | 45.8%                  |
| 6-10.....         | 8.7%                   |
| 11-20 .....       | 0.9%                   |

### What are the 3 biggest expenses of your business? (Each respondent marked his or her top 3, with the aggregate score used for the results.)

1. Hay
  2. Feed
  3. Labor
  4. Mortgage
  5. Insurance
  6. Veterinarian
  7. Farrier
  8. Event Travel
- Other responses included bedding, irrigation water, property maintenance, worker's comp insurance, rent and taxes.

### Who Responded to This Survey

Nearly 50% of respondents have been actively involved in the equine industry for more than 30 years. While this shows a passion for the career, it also points out that there are many stables/farms that need to have a succession plan in place for when the current owners decide to retire or sell their properties. If there

are not people available with the interest or financial backing to purchase or lease these facilities, the industry could be facing a crisis of losing a significant number of boarding farms/stables in the next decade.

It's also interesting that more than 60% of respondents who are operating an equine facility said the equine business was their secondary source of income. Of that group, 68% said it accounted for less than 25% of their total income, while an additional 27% it accounted for 26-49% of their total income.

Almost 80% of respondents have at least a college degree.

### Jobs and Income

When asked what jobs each respondent performs at his or her farm/stable, each respondent selected the top three jobs, with the aggregate score used for the results; note that Barn/Farm Manager and Stable/Farm Owner were less than one percentage point difference.

1. Barn/Farm Manager  
Stable/Farm Owner
2. Instructor (people)
3. Trainer (horses)
4. Barn Employee
5. Breeder

### Take-Home Message

This is a lot of information to digest, but the top message might be that our industry doesn't offer the same services under the same title of "boarding." Full board, partial board and pasture board don't mean the same thing at every barn. There are many services that some farms include in the monthly board fee that other farms charge as *a la carte* offerings. If you are running a boarding farm or stable, you should have a written boarding contract that stipulates what is included in your board fee and which services are offered for an additional fee.

Those who own boarding farms and stables are an experienced, educated, aging group who often run these facilities as a secondary source of income to the family. Without a succession plan for what will happen to the operation and land in the future, it is possible that we will see a decline of boarding options in the next 10 years as owners become unwilling (or unable) to do the work required, and facilities are sold and no longer kept as a public boarding stables.

With the decline in agricultural farms for some of the same reasons, we will continue to see problems finding affordable, suitable horse hay (the number-one expense of facilities in this survey).

There also are some bright spots in this survey, noting areas where facilities might be able to add services (such as group lessons or clinics) or charge for services that they now offer for free. In addition, there is the need to make sure that in your area that you are charging sufficiently for the services you are offering.

Boarding farms and stables, especially those that offer lessons to non-horse owners, are an important incubator of the next generation of horse owners in our industry. Your boarding facility is a business, and the most critical aspects of that business are providing quality services and managing your time so that your business is profitable. **SM**