

HorsesLandWater

# Urban Horse Keeping

Pocket guide for horse keepers in the  
greater Adelaide metropolitan area



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South Australia**



## Useful links

Adelaide & Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board

[www.amlrnm.sa.gov.au](http://www.amlrnm.sa.gov.au)

Environment Protection Authority

[www.epa.sa.gov.au](http://www.epa.sa.gov.au)

Department of Planning and Local Government

[www.planning.sa.gov.au](http://www.planning.sa.gov.au)

Guide for Applicants (Horse Keeping )

“search” the Planning SA site

***The full “Urban Horse Keeping Guide” linked to this pocket guide can be downloaded from [www.horseslandwater.com](http://www.horseslandwater.com) and [www.horsesa.asn.au](http://www.horsesa.asn.au)***

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## INTRODUCTION

**H**orse keeping is a meaningful and rewarding activity, which for some becomes a lifestyle all of its own. For trainers, breeders, coaches, etc, it can represent a full or part time business and is part of the economic picture of this state.

The guide offers tips on good stable yard design features and practices, which will help stable managers meet responsibilities under the South Australian Natural Resources Management Act and Development Act, and be useful as an aid to improving day to day operations, or to introduce improved practices with environmental benefit.

Development approval is required for establishing or expanding stable yard operations and the guide has been designed to assist horse owners to plan sustainable horse keeping properties with good amenities that will meet planning approval criteria and assist with applications for horse related development.



## HORSE KEEPING SYSTEMS

When deciding how to best manage your stable yard, first considerations are: how many horses you will be keeping and how they will be housed, exercised and fed. As more horses are kept on a given area of land, more time, money, management and facilities will be needed for it to be a successful and environmentally sustainable enterprise.



*Above: Landscaping around yarding not only looks good but helps reduce dust and provide shelter.*

A realistic approach needs to be taken so that the horse property can be well managed within budget, time constraints, and meet your personal or business goals, so that the horses are healthy and there is no detrimental effect on the environment. Councils have rules and regulations around how many horses can be kept, and depending on each region, requirements on how this is undertaken.

Horse keeping systems fall into three main types: Low input (paddocks, no hand feeding), Medium input (paddocks, with hand feeding), and High input (stables or yards). How horses are kept will depend on the type of enterprise e.g. racing, showjumpers, lifestyle, etc., council “rules” or zoning and the capabilities of the land. The information in the guide is primarily aimed at high input horse keeping, but many aspects are also applicable to medium or low input horse keeping systems.

## HORSE KEEPING REGULATIONS

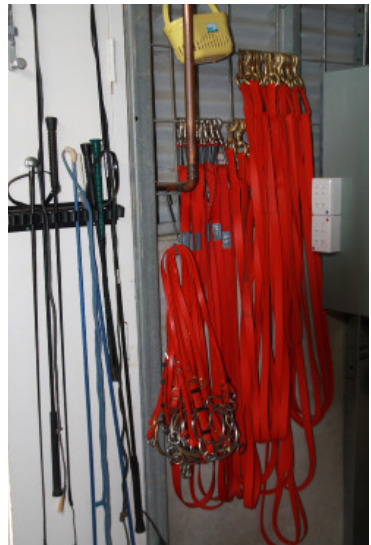
The keeping of horses is regulated in South Australia and a minimum standard of environmental management is required. The state government has regulations under the *Development Act 1993*, under which horse keeping is: *'The keeping or husbandry of horses where more than one horse is kept per three hectares [7.4 acres] of land used for such purposes or where hand feeding of a horse is involved.'*

Horse property owners may need to seek Development Approval from their local council when more than one horse is kept per 3 hectares, or when associated structures, such as stables and holding yards for horses are intended to be built or expanded or where hand feeding of a horse is involved.

Each local council has its own "Development Plan" which contains the planning controls against which development applications are assessed. Many Development Plans identify where horses can and cannot be kept.

### Applying for Development Approval

When you are ready to make an application, the council planner can outline each of the steps required. The council planner or the Council's Development Assessment Panel will then make a decision to approve the application without change, approve subject to certain conditions, or refuse the application.



Above: Tidy tack rooms keep mould and rodents at bay.

## DESCRIBING YOUR ENTERPRISE

**H**orses are kept on public and private land, using a range of horse keeping systems run for different purposes which may be as a business, for equestrian sports or recreational benefit. A description of the enterprise is one of the first steps in preparing a development application or a property management plan.

The description should include: aims of the enterprise, an overview of income sources and budget constraints, and short and long term goals for the property. Some premises may have permanent horse keeping facilities but horses only stay very short term, such as: saleyards, veterinary clinics, transport operator holding yards, and overnight yards on public equestrian & show grounds.

## PREPARING A SITE PLAN

**H**orse property facilities such as stables, yards and exercise areas need to be well designed and managed to optimise horse health and welfare and avoid detrimental effects on the environment, issues with neighbours, etc. Issues to be taken into account include: odour, noise, pest plants and animals, increased dust and/or mud, and pollution of water resources. The site plan should identify of all the horse related infrastructure, including layout & dimensions, distance from boundaries, watercourse, note any existing native vegetation, and any bores, dams or wells. The site plan should also note how many horses are expected to be kept and the proposed system under which they will be maintained.

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## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMMON STABLE YARD STRUCTURES

**A** good looking stable yard is clean, tidy and well presented at all times. For relatively small outlay the value of a property can be increased through landscaping, well maintained facilities and overall presentation. The welfare of the animals needs to be taken into consideration as well.

Horses have evolved to be free-ranging, grazing, socially orientated short-flight prey animals. Horses do not cope as well when living in small yards, confined spaces, with a lack of continual grazing opportunity or environmental stimulation. Confinement for long hours in isolation can lead to undesirable behaviours and/or poor athletic performance.

Over recent years equine behavioural research has provided new findings which are making their way into mainstream practice to improve horse care and management. Likewise, knowledge about ways to save energy, protect water quality and other measurable ways to enhance and protect the environment have improved, and need included in stable yard designs and management routines.

### **Stables**

Planning regulations for most metropolitan Adelaide councils do not state a required floor size for a horse stable (or roof height), tending to be more concerned with its position on a block.

As a rough guide, a horse needs enough room to be able to lie down, roll & get up again safely, walk forward and around without reverting to having to pivot on its hindquarters to change direction. A tall horse will need enough room to ensure injury to the poll is avoided should it throw up its head.

A higher roof allows for better circulation and exchange of air, resulting in odour reduction and improved air quality within the stable.

## **Yards**

Well designed horse yards will have shade, shelter from prevailing winds, be well drained and have design features to reduce dust and mud. Yards need to be subject to the same management regimes as stables, being that they are cleaned regularly and are well maintained. Round yards provide on-site options for exercising a horse and can double as a sand roll.

## **Vehicles & Floats**

Pedestrian, horse and vehicular access to the site should be provided in locations that ensure safety.

Consider what vehicles need access and where e.g. farriers, horse floats, trucks delivering feed, etc.; how many vehicles and floats are to be parked on site/ do these need to be under cover/secured; driveway set back angles to allow safe access and egress from the property? How will horse floats & trucks be cleaned out? Park on a grassed area if possible to facilitate filtration of dirty water. Frequent washing of trucks will require establishment of a facility design to separate out clean and dirty water.

## **Fodder Storage**

A rodent proof feed room & storage needs to be located near to where the horses are housed. Easy truck access for deliveries. Hay & bedding ideally stored in a separate building that is weather and rodent proof. Storing hay in a different building from where the horses are housed and people regularly work reduces the fire risk.

**Other facilities to consider include Tack room, Staff room, Wash Bay, Crush, Sand Rolls, Horse Walkers & Pools, Riding Arenas.**



*Above: Barn style stable design Below Right: Rodent proof feed storage  
Below Left: Hay stored on pallets makes for easy loading from trucks, keeps air moving around the bales and aids in laying mouse traps.*



Right: Large stable complexes that have frequent horse washing taking place will need to separate “clean” from “Dirty” water. Note separate downpipe from gutter and berm in front of wash bay to prevent dirty water spilling out into stormwater drains.



Left: Smaller stable yards benefit from a hardened surface to prevent mud, with dirty water filtered through grass, such as Kikuyu

Right: Ground cover is very important. On this small house block size paddock, the owner grows a crop, slashes and leaves it to act as a ground cover rather than having bare ground.



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## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

**M**any areas of the environmental considerations are covered by regulations (air and water quality, pollution control, pest plant and animal control), but wise management of a property to create the best possible environment should be the manager's goal regardless, as it has added benefits of increasing the value and amenity of the property.

### Soil Management

A general understanding of the natural features of the district in which your stable yard is located will help plan day to day and seasonal horse management routines, layout of buildings and guide longer term property and land improvement decisions. Each district has a different topographic profile, different soil types and soil depths which are affected by the average rainfall and prevailing winds. If applying for horse keeping permission, it is a requirement to describe these features and how they will impact on your proposed horse keeping enterprise.

### Ground cover

It is important that there is adequate groundcover on properties to prevent the risk of soil erosion by water or wind and to reduce dust or mud which can lead to problems with horses' health, amenity and neighbour complaints. Groundcover includes living plants (pasture, natural vegetation), mulch, stones or gravel.

Soil erosion by water (i.e. rain washing soil from yards due to constant hoof traffic) can result in pollution of watercourses and drains filling up with silt. Dust increases the risk of horses getting respiratory tract infections. Steep slopes and watercourses are more susceptible to erosion.

Paddocks need to be managed to promote good pasture growth.

Desirable pasture plants need reasonably good soil fertility levels as well as a soil pH that is not strongly acidic and low competition from weeds. Soil tests are readily available and will assist in making decisions. Be especially vigilant of ground cover levels in fragile areas (steep slopes, water courses and wet soil areas) as these can be damaged more easily by horses. Remove horses immediately when there are signs of damage to the pasture or before ground cover levels get low.

## **Steep Slopes**

Steeply sloping land needs to be carefully managed as there is usually a high risk of soil erosion. Only allow grazing on steeper slopes for short periods, if at all, when there is plenty of pasture cover, and the soil is not wet. Vegetate slopes, consider sowing or encouraging perennial native grasses on these areas to help provide a hardwearing ground cover that will last well through summer.

## **Native Vegetation**

Horse property owners have responsibilities under law to preserve and protect existing native vegetation, including forest, woodland, grasslands, wetlands and vegetation associated with watercourses. Urban stable yards can also contribute to valuable habitat for our dwindling native plant and animal communities.

## **Weeds**

Weeds are a threat to native vegetation, reduce available grazing and detract from the amenity of a horse property. Abundant weeds in a paddock usually indicate that pasture quality is poor, and may also be an indicator of low soil fertility or acidic soil. Declared (proclaimed) pest plants need to be controlled. At worst they may be toxic to horses, or at best, be of lower feed value than pasture grasses.

## **Water Management**

Unless intensively used areas are sealed there may be problems with mud, dust and/or soil erosion. This can lead to pollution of watercourses, including public drains, dams and creeks if management regimes and facility design features are not put into place.

Work out how water will be managed over the year on the property. Consider: how much water will you need; how will you get/store water (tanks, dams, mains, bores), is there a role for recycled or grey water? Consider water saving devices, water reticulation systems. How will you manage waste water and prevent it from entering storm water?

The Adelaide & Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board will provide advice on paddock watering systems, dams, fencing off creeklines, wet areas and fords. As you plan your stable yard water requirements, it is worth checking the SA Water website for any water saving tips and rebates that may be available.

## **Pollution Prevention**

Property owners applying for horse keeping permission or development approval for expansion will be required to provide information on how pollution will be managed. Consider: any chemicals that may be used, where they will be stored and how accidental spills will be contained and controlled; how stormwater will be managed to separate clean stormwater (e.g. from roofs) from dirty stormwater (e.g. stables, manure); how/ where manure will be stored & disposed of.

## **Air Quality**

Manure and urine smell can be almost eliminated with good design and daily management practices. Good stable yard design and day to day management regimes will reduce or eliminate most visible dust e.g. from riding arenas or driveways.

## **Pest Animals**

Many animals & birds introduced into Australia including foxes, rabbits, rodents, starlings, sparrows and pigeons, have now become pests in urban areas. Flies and mosquitoes may also require management to prevent spread of disease. The presence of pest animals can also reduce the value of a property. Property owners have responsibilities to control pest animals.

## **DEALING WITH WASTE**

**A**s part of preparing a property plan or applying for development approval, a detailed plan of how stable yard waste is to be managed will be required. Regular removal of manure prevents surface water contamination, assists with parasite control and reduces opportunities for fly breeding.

Agricultural and chemical products include many veterinary products, fertilisers, pesticides, insecticides and fuels. Property managers need to be aware of, and comply with, regulations that apply to the storage, transport and disposal of chemicals and veterinary products. Veterinary medical waste will need to be stored & disposed of separately.

## **BIOSECURITY, FIRE AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

**H**orse property owners are responsible for preparing their own emergency response plans, which should cover diseases and natural disasters.

Subscribe to the weekly Horse SA newsletter to keep up to date with alerts (visit [www.horsesa.asn.au](http://www.horsesa.asn.au)), or visit Horse SA website for links to the Bushfire Buddy website and free resources to download.



*Top Left: Bushfire Plans need to include livestock*



*Top Right: Isolation Stable*

*Bottom: Fire Preparation in a feed room*



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