



Factors to Consider Beyond Just the 'Day Rate'

Considering the investment involved—both personal and financial—Thoroughbred owners should not take the care of their horses for granted. There are many more factors to consider beyond just the normal “day rate” a boarding operation charges. The welfare of each horse should be of paramount concern with any boarding operation, focusing on such key factors as safety, veterinary care, and employee competence. What follows are informative looks at various associations and farms offering boarding as one of their services in the Thoroughbred industry.

Arundel Farm

Matthew and Victoria Hewitt, the owners of Arundel Farm, appreciate the challenge of making a small breeding operation successful, having been boarding clients themselves. To help their customers, they are introducing for the 2012 breeding season a flat-rate boarding schedule.

“Many people think that what they will be paying is just the day rate, but then they find there are innumerable overhead charges they had never been expecting,” Victoria said. “Our rate eliminates the ‘fear’ of board bills by being all-inclusive. We don’t charge more for necessities, like stalling, when there is bad weather.”

The rate even covers trips to the breeding shed.

The quality of Arundel Farm’s personal care is reflected in its statistics. Since 2002 the farm has gotten 96% of its mares in foal. Among the horses foaled on the farm over the past five years (an average of 20 per year), 12 were nominated to the Triple Crown series and four became graded stakes winners.

Communication and hands-on manage-

ment besides the sensitivity to owners’ costs are the guiding principles at Arundel Farm.

A top priority for the Hewitts is regular contact by phone and e-mail with their clients regarding the status of their mares and young horses. They handle stallion bookings, offer sale prep, and connect clients with reputable consignors if they want to sell a horse.

Dr. Donnie Vice, a veterinarian in Jackson, Miss., is one client who has seen firsthand the benefits of boarding with Arundel Farm.

“I have a couple of mares that can be difficult to get in foal, and they got them all in foal this year,” said Vice. “I have used several other farms, but I wanted to find a place I could work with. I have input in how things are handled, and we discuss things really well.”

The 130-acre boarding farm near Paris, Ky., has been in business since 2002, when the Hewitts relocated from Northern California. Both had careers outside of the horse industry: Matthew had his own mechanical/electrical engineering company

and Victoria worked as the principal of a middle school, while running their California breeding farm. Their first experience with Kentucky boarding farms was as a client, and it wasn’t always favorable.

“We shipped back and forth to Kentucky and were tired of our mares coming back thin and barren and always hearing that it was the mare’s fault,” said Victoria. Owning a Kentucky farm had long been one of Victoria’s childhood dreams, and both Hewitts knew they would offer better customer service.

“A lot of people are concerned about going to small, more modest operations because they think they are getting less,” said Victoria. “We work with Dr. James Slaughter, one of the best reproductive vets in the area, and we look at every horse, every day. We treat every client’s mare like it is a million-dollar mare, like she is one of our own horses.”

Dutchess Views Farm

Because of its location, amenities, and outstanding service, Dutchess Views Farm, a full-service Thoroughbred facility that caters to just about every aspect of the industry, is ideally suited to board horses.

Situated on 150 scenic acres near Pine Plains, N.Y., Dutchess Views is owned by Michael Lischin and his wife, Anya Sheckley. Since the mid-1990s it has catered to those seeking boarding, breeding, foaling, sales preparation and representation, racing partnerships, and industry consul-

Dutchess Views Farm is located in Pine Plains, NY in the fertile Hudson Valley. We are conveniently located two hours north of Belmont and Aqueduct and one and one-half hours south of Saratoga.

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- Michael Lischin

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tation. In addition, because of Lischin's background in law and Sheckley's insurance company, Hammertown Insurance Agency, equine legal services and insurance services are also part of what they offer.

"We have extensive contacts throughout all levels and geographic areas of our industry based on our more than 30 years experience in the Thoroughbred industry," Lischin said. "These services and contacts

enable us to provide a great deal of valuable assistance to people participating in the New York-bred program."

Dutchess Views is an attractive boarding option for those in the eastern New York area because it sits just two hours north of Belmont Park and Aqueduct and is only 1½ hours south of Saratoga. Boston is also not far away.

A former polo facility, Dutchess Views has an open and airy feel that horses enjoy. Highlights of the farm are its stallion barn with six 14x24-foot stalls, a pair of broodmare barns totaling more than 80 stalls, and 25 paddocks that all include automatic heated water systems. The eight foaling stalls are complete with security cameras and are monitored by the managers and a full-time night watchman. The farm has foaled up to 90 mares in a year.

Lischin and Sheckley live on the farm and actively breed and race, giving them a vested interest in the business as well as a pulse on current happenings in the industry. They even stand three stallions at Dutchess Views: Andromeda's Hero, Patriot Act, and Roaring Fever.

"We can help people with their own mares or find the right trainer if they race, because we are active in doing that ourselves," Lischin said. "We will even take lay-ups. We feel like we can help clients with whatever they might need."

Foggy Bottom Farm

Foggy Bottom Farm, a full-service farm nestled in the heart of the Genesee Valley in Western New York, prides itself on managing clients' Thoroughbreds at any stage of

their development.

"We really have the ideal set-up here," said owner Beverly Least, who has recently turned the day-to-day management and operation of the farm over to her son Gary. "We have large foaling stalls with paddocks off the stall so every horse can be in the barn when needed. I think it also gives new mothers a calm, confident feeling."

The farm is also a complete breaking and training facility that includes a five-eighths of a mile turf training track, a starting gate, and an Equicizer with a sand and rubber composite base.

Least has been a horse lover her entire life, having started out riding Standardbreds and pleasure horses. She and her husband bought the more than 100-acre farm about 30 years ago to support the family's horse hobbies. Gary and his sister grew up with fox hunting, and he went on to compete as an amateur steeplechase jockey.


Gary later went to work at Finger Lakes Race Track, which is only 30 miles from Foggy Bottom. At the track he met his future wife, Laurel, and now they work side by side running the family farm.

It has been a challenge for a small family-run operation to find its niche, but Gary said the recent recession has helped the family focus on what it does best.

"We're not a big operation that can throw money at our challenges," Gary said. "Instead, we throw horsemanship and elbow grease at our problems. We are in the business of being able to drop off a horse at the racetrack or take it to a sale and have people say, 'Wow, that is a good-looking horse.'"

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Foggy Bottom does stand four stallions—Northern Spur, winner of the 1995 Breeders' Cup Turf (gr. IT) and that year's male turf champion; Skip to the Stone, Slice of Reality, and Liberatedbyforce. The farm also oversees a relatively small broodmare band, which it doesn't want to grow too much in order to maintain the highest level of quality care.

Foggy Bottom is branching out into the commercial sales market, having dipped its toe into the Fasig-Tipton Saratoga select yearling sale this year. Both horses the Least sold were profitable for their clients, so Gary is ready to go back.

"We have expanded to offer prepping services and are looking for horses specifically for this sale," Gary said. "It falls in line with a lot of what we are already doing. We can change a horse dramatically after 30 days so it is dappled and looking proper, whether it is for the races or the sales."

Lake Shore Farm

Lake Shore Farm, a 60-acre operation near Scottsburg, Ind., has only been up and running for around two years, but the extensive experience of its partnership owners is already paving a successful road for the future.

The farm was founded in November 2009 by Indianapolis native Louie Annee and his son, Kevin, who had raced horses for several years prior to acquiring the property.

"They were starting to get some mares and were looking for someone to take care of their farm so I joined in with them—we

met through a mutual friend," said farm manager Gale Bess, who started working at Lake Shore in July 2010 and is now a partner in the breeding and racing outfit. Bess, who has been involved in the industry for more than a decade, had a similar role at another Indiana Thoroughbred farm prior to his current position.

Lake Shore stood three stallions this year and has acquired two new individuals to stand for 2012. The farm's 2011 roster included Mr. Mabee (by Storm Cat), Act of War (by Lord At War), and Lantana Mob (by Posse) (they also stood Chief Seattle and Mancini). New to the Lake Shore roster for 2012 are Zavata, a graded stakes-winning son of Phone Trick, and Spanish Steps, a full brother to Unbridled's Song.

Lake Shore also boards horses and offers sales prep services. The farm features a newly renovated foaling barn, a full-service breeding shed, and a recently built stallion barn.

"We give quality care to our horses, offer reasonable prices, and our business has grown...we've had a good year, and we expect our business is going to expand again in 2012," said Bess. "We're looking to acquire more land and increase our racing stable."

One of the farm's triumphs in 2011 was the success of Mr. Mabee's 2-year-olds on the track.

The stallion was represented by his first winner when his son Mabeemore won at Hoosier Park Oct. 6 in his debut. Mr. Mabee's second winner, Mabee Stormy, won his second start at Hoosier Park Oct. 11.

"We're heavily focused on the Indiana sire program," said Bess. "We're breeding the horses we think will make good 2-year-olds, and we want to continue to improve the quality of the horse in Indiana."

Lake Shore's best horse in training is homebred Coming On, a 3-year-old Indiana-bred son of Presidential Order. Out of one of Lake Shore's top mares, Jennierees (by Gold Case), Coming On has been on the board in six of his 10 starts and has earned \$72,632.

When asked about his favorite aspect of the industry, Bess said, "I enjoy breeding the mares, foaling out the babies, and then watching them crossing the finish line. That gives me a real satisfaction."

McMahon of Saratoga

With apologies to Kentucky and Ocala, Fla., right now New York is the hottest center of activity in the Thoroughbred industry. And no farm is better positioned to take care of the influx of new business than McMahon of Saratoga Thoroughbreds, which in 2011 is celebrating its 40th year of boarding, breeding, and raising racehorses.

Located just a few miles from both Saratoga Race Course and the Humphrey S. Finney sale pavilion, McMahon of Saratoga boasts more than 300 acres of pasture and 140 stalls for both year-round resident mares and those visiting for the breeding season. The farm not only emphasizes its boarding facilities, but preps 30-40 yearlings annually for the Fasig-Tipton Saratoga New York-bred preferred sale and the Fasig-Tipton Midlantic sale in Maryland.

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Its hands-on philosophy is evident in the emphasis McMahon places on hand-walking yearlings and making sure each is groomed to show its highest potential.

A dozen employees help the McMahon family, which now has two generations working the farm. Founders Joe and Anne McMahon are aided by their sons and daughters as well as in-laws. Their son John manages the farm and his wife, Kate, is instrumental in the boarding and mare facets. John's sisters, Tara Letzring and Jane McMahon, co-manage the office. It is truly a family operation.

There have been many success stories that have come off the farm, but none bigger than Funny Cide, who was part of McMahon's 2000 foal crop. The New York-bred captured the imagination of the racing world when he won the 2003 Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes (both gr. I) and came so close to completing the Triple Crown. Funny Cide won an Eclipse Award as that year's top 3-year-old male, and was also a grade I winner at 4.

The McMahon outfit has enjoyed success with its consignments to the New York-bred sale in Saratoga as well. In 2008

it sold out of its consignment, as agent, the sale-topper, a son of Exchange Rate who was hammered down for \$250,000.

The farm foals between 85-120 mares per season, with a family member on hand for virtually each birth. With New York in the spotlight and more and more mares arriving in the Empire State, including those that will be sent to Adena Springs stallions such as Touch Gold, Tiago, Alphabet Soup, and Silent Name, who are all standing at McMahons, the Saratoga farm is a logical place for New York boarding needs.

Mighty Acres

Randy Blair brought more than experience to his job as farm manager at Dr. Warren Center's Mighty Acres near Pryor, Okla. He brought everyday horse sense of what a farm should offer.

"We try to provide good services in a safe, modern facility and work closely with our vets," said Blair, who has more than 30 years of experience as a farm manager.

Center hired Blair to run Mighty Acres when he started the farm 8½ years ago.

"We operate on 250 acres and 40 acres that are leased," Blair said. "We offer breeding, boarding, sales prep, foaling, and lay-ups."

Equine accommodations play a large part in the farm's attraction.

"The main barn has foaling stalls, a breeding area, and a vet room," Blair said. "There's also a 52-stall mare barn with oversized stalls for foaling and a 25-stall barn. Last year we built a 16-stall barn for sales prep. We also have a covered round pen and a six-horse Eurocizer."

Blair feels Oklahoma does a good job rewarding breeders and owners.

"The Oklahoma-bred program is doing very well—the purses and breeders' awards are getting better and better," he said.

Mighty Acres is 15 miles from Will Rogers Downs and 150 miles from Remington Park. Mighty Acres doesn't have a training track, but there is one nearby. Dr. Center is a partner in Harmony Training Center near Inola, Okla., about 25 miles from Mighty Acres.

The six-furlong Harmony training track is 40 feet wide with a 200-yard chute and is completely railed. The barns are constructed with closeable curtains and retractable doors to help control the interior climate year round. Stalls are open metal mesh fronts allowing for optimal air circulation.

Mighty Acres' equine graduates are led by Kip Deville, the 2007 NetJets Breeders' Cup Mile (gr. IT) winner who finished second to Goldikova in the following year's Mile. Kip Deville earned a career total of \$3,325,489. Kip Deville's sire, Kipling, stood at Mighty Acres but now stands at Pope



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Mighty Acres stands five stallions: Air Commander (by Point Given), Ra Ra Superstar (Deputy Minister), Save Big Money (Storm Cat), The Visualiser (Giant's Causeway), and Toccet (Awesome Again), who ranks atop Oklahoma's leading sires' list this year with progeny earnings of more than \$2.2 million.

New York Breeding and Racing Program

With the long-awaited Resorts World Casino opening at Aqueduct last month, a recent announcement of a 50% across-the-board increase in breeders' awards for state-breds, and purse hikes, the sky seems to be the limit for the New York-bred Thoroughbred program.

With horsemen ramping up for what should be a much busier 2012 breeding season, they figure to have a lot more options with the addition of stallions such as Bluegrass Cat from Kentucky and last year's Belmont Stakes (gr. I) winner Droselmeyer.

"I'm hoping all this news inspires people to buy a mare in a broodmare sale and bring her on up to New York to really improve upon their purchase," said Tracy Egan, executive director of the New York Thoroughbred Breeding and Development Fund.

While many stallion rosters are getting upgrades, one thing New Yorkers can count on is that a lot more mares from out of state will be bred in the Empire State this coming season.

"When Northern Dancer stood in Maryland, the world went to Maryland," Egan

said. "I truly believe that may be true for New York. The world can easily come here, breed here, raise their foals here, and stay here to run for the big money."

According to Egan, the New York Racing Association just raised the maiden purses for New York-breds to \$50,000-\$55,000, and that is for the Aqueduct winter and spring meet. She expects even higher purses for Belmont in the spring and Saratoga next summer. Last year NYRA increased the maiden special-weight purses for New York-breds at the Belmont spring meet to \$62,000.

According to Egan, the breeding fund changed its mission statement this year "to promote by monetary incentives the responsible breeding of quality Thoroughbred racehorses in keeping with the founding legislation to preserve New York's irreplaceable farm land."

"'Responsible' carries a lot of weight and so does the 'breeding of quality Thoroughbred racehorses,'" Egan said.

Even though the incentives will entice owners to send new mares to New York, the increase in awards begins Jan. 1, so current owners of New York-breds will be running for more money and breeders will be receiving higher awards early next year.

Looks like plenty of blue sky from here.

Nuckols Farm

Ninety years after the first stakes winner came off its fields, Nuckols Farm just outside Midway, Ky., is still going strong. The third and fourth generations of the Nuckols family to work the farm are now in charge of the day-to-day operation, and that family atmosphere is evident in the personal care

given to the equine residents.

Nuckols Farm has continued to grow, recently adding acreage and stalls that have now spread the operation over 1,150 acres with 220 stalls. The horses graze and romp in 30-acre fields for each 10-12 head. Practically every barn on the property is on spring or well water, and Nuckols Farm raises its own finest-quality hay, alfalfa, and wheat straw, the latter for bedding. It is as self-contained as an operation today can get.

Its location just west of Midway consists of the finest soil in the region. The silty loam nourishes some 180 horses that call Nuckols Farm home. The clientele comes from around the United States and around the world. Customers from as far away as Spain, Japan, and New Zealand send their horses here. So do Hollywood heavyweights such as actor/playwright Sam Shepard and "Jeopardy" host Alex Trebek.

They are assured of the finest care for their horses, as the staff that manages the farm boasts experience plus. Nuckols Farm employs three crews of workers, and each crew foreman has worked there an incredible average of 25 years.

The proof, though, is in the quality of horses that have come off the farm since that first stakes winner, Tip Toe Inn, in 1923. Following have been horses such as White Skies, Typecast, Decathlon, Habitat, Mr. Leader, Sweetest Chant, Mademoiselle Forli, Distorted Humor, and recent dual classic winner War Emblem, among many others.

The farm emphasizes the individual handling of each foal every day. Two of the farm's workers are assigned to each 20-

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stall barn and have responsibility for those horses. Besides the high-quality pasture, the farm has a custom feed mix made for it by local supplier Woodford Feed.

Mares that are boarded at Nuckols Farm may well want to visit Kentucky Derby (gr. I) winner Monarchos, who stands at stud at Nuckols. The 2001 Derby winner is popular with mares and people, and at busy times such as when the Breeders' Cup is at nearby Churchill Downs, dozens of people ask to visit Monarchos.

Nuckols Farm, today run by Charles Nuckols III, has a tradition as rich as its soil, and clients can rest assured horses are cared for in the tried-and-true manner of being kept as close to nature as possible with the finest of human help.

Old Mill Farm

Old Mill Farm, a 150-acre facility steeped in history, has been nurtured and developed for the last three decades by fourth-generation horseman Billy Wright.

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Owner: William W. Wright

Formerly a mining operation, the Cartersville, Ga.-based Old Mill was purchased by Wright's great-grandparents and converted into a Thoroughbred facility.

Wright, 51, formerly served as a Thoroughbred trainer in New York and Florida and took over Old Mill in the 1980s. He now handles the breaking and conditioning of the horses boarded at the facility.

Old Mill employs a handful of longtime workers, including a regular exercise rider. Its amenities include a five-eighths mile track, four-horse hot walker, round pen, cinderblock stalls, indoor jogging track, quarantine facility, and custom feed program.

Old Mill is historically known as the former home site of the late prominent Argentine trainer Horatio Luro, who was married to Wright's grandmother, Frances. Luro trained the likes of Kentucky Derby winners Decidedly and Northern Dancer, plus multiple stakes winner and champion sire Princequillo.

Following in Luro's successful footsteps, Wright trained and owned multiple grade I-winning millionaire El Senor, back-to-back victor of the Sword Dancer Handicap (gr. IT) in 1989-90. He also conditioned Bailrullah, winner of the 1987 Diana Handicap (gr. IIT).

Old Mill currently has three major clients with plans to expand its business in the future. One of the best horses bred by the farm in recent years is Ambitones (by Action This Day), a multiple winner in 2010 and 2011.

Another homebred, Hurling, 3-year-old gelding by Prime Meridian, races for Old Mill and scored a win at Saratoga in August.

Wright owns a handful of additional horses in partnership with a longtime friend, trainer Billy Cesare, including an unraced juvenile filly named Londoness, for whom he has high hopes. One of Wright's best mares, Numerous Ambition, is the dam of both Ambitones and Londoness.

Wright, who serves on the board of directors of the Florida Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association and as a member of the Georgia Horse Racing Commission, said even though Georgia does not have its own Thoroughbred racetrack, legislation is getting closer to allowing racing in the state.

"I think (racing legislation) could actually pass this year if everybody understands how many jobs it will provide," said Wright. "There have been little obstacles throughout, but we've worked on it very hard, and I think we're a lot closer than we've ever been."

In spite of the struggling economy, Wright remains optimistic about Old Mill and its rich history.

"It's a beautiful farm, and it's been here longer than most farms in America, and I'm very proud of it," he said. "I enjoy seeing the horses I trained having babies, and then watching them win. It's cool watching multiple generations you've bred become winners."

Waldorf Farm

As an equine veterinarian, Dr. Jerry Bilinski realizes the importance of care that enables horses to live long and fruitful lives, and he stresses that adherence to quality in the operation of his Waldorf

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"The main thing is to have everything done correctly, and we provide quality, individual care around the clock," said Bilinski, who has operated the Old Chatham farm for more than 20 years. "It's a neat, clean, and efficient operation. I like to say 'only the best stay at the Waldorf.'"

A full-service Thoroughbred facility situated on more than 375 picturesque acres in North Chatham, Waldorf combines hands-on care, such as having a night watchman on duty to monitor the foaling process, with state-of-the-art advances such as electronic foal monitors and video cameras that tape the foaling of each mare on the premises. The farm's boarders include broodmares, horses that need rehabilitation, and lay-ups taking a break from the rigors of competition.

The farm previously stood stallions, the most prominent of which was Cormorant, the sire of Kentucky Derby (gr. I) winner Go for Gin. Bilinski notes that Cormorant is an example of how the farm takes care of its horses, with the stallion living until age 33. Both Cormorant and Belmont Stakes (gr. I) winner Go and Go are buried at Waldorf.

Not only does Bilinski reside on the farm, making him available to handle any situation that might arise, but his equine practice is located across the road from Waldorf, which now consists of three different tracts of property.

"We are veterinary owned and managed," he said with pride.

Because Bilinski and the other four veterinarians at the clinic specialize in reproduction, some of the boarders at Waldorf

are mares that have had foaling problems, although all horses on the farm receive the same level of care.

"You have to be prepared 24 hours a day," Bilinski said. "Waldorf is professionally run and managed and horses are treated as individuals," he said.

With purses at the New York racetracks and the state's breeders' incentive funds being boosted as a result of revenues from the VLT casino at Aqueduct, Bilinski and the Waldorf staff headed by managers Buster and Teri Brown are prepared.

"New York has always had the best Thoroughbred racing program in the nation, and it is only fitting that we will now have the best breeding program," Bilinski said. "If you want to breed a racehorse, come to New York, the 'green grass' state."

Whispering Oaks Farm

Raised in the horse business, Keith and Allen Crupper operate Whispering Oaks Farm near Paris, Ky. Their parents ran a boarding farm, so the brothers learned early in life what was important to keep clients and their Thoroughbreds happy.

"We're open 24 hours a day so people can come see their horses, and to us the horse is No. 1," Keith said. "We try to provide the horses on the farm with the best nutrition. We give them Western alfalfa hay, and our high-quality custom feed comes from Winchester Feed & Supply near here. We also have a dedicated staff that has been with us for a while and two full-time veterinarians that are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Located on approximately 200 acres of

gently rolling countryside, Whispering Oaks consists of two farms, with Keith and his wife, Lisa, living on one and Allen and his wife, Kim, residing on the other.

"There is somebody around all the time," Keith said.

Facilities at Whispering Oaks include four barns with a combined total of 77 stalls. Two of the structures are converted tobacco barns, and the other two were recently built. Four-board fences enclose the pastures.

Allen oversees a racing division that is based at The Thoroughbred Center near Lexington.

"We have a private barn that is located in the back where it's quiet," Keith said.

One aspect of the horse business the brothers especially enjoy is offering buying and selling advice to clients.

"We tend to do our buying and selling privately," Keith said.

But if someone wants to offer a Thoroughbred at public auction, the brothers can recommend a consignor and prepare the horse to be sold.

Keith assisted Mark Allen and Dr. Leonard Blach in the acquisition of Canadian champion Mine That Bird, who went on to win the 2009 Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (gr. I). Whisper Oaks Farm assisted in the private sale of Tiz Chrome after he broke his maiden by 3/4 lengths at Churchill Downs. The son of Tiznow captured the 2009 Stuka Stakes at Hollywood Park.

"What we really like to do is to buy yearlings, get them going as 2-year-olds, and then sell them," Keith said. ☐



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