

Work Areas in the Barn

How to create effective work areas in your barn.

By Karen Briggs

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When you have horses, you also have a lot of stuff. Brooms and muck forks, tack, feed bins, grooming equipment, wheelbarrows ... it all accumulates, and while you want it to be accessible, you don't want it to be overflowing into the areas of your barn where you'll be leading and housing your equine pals.

Kelly Christiansen, general manager of Equi-Tech Inc., a Salt Lake City, Utah design firm specializing in equine housing, has some useful tips for creating effective, convenient and safe work areas in your barn. For example: Rather than using the central barn aisle for cross-tying horses to groom and tack up—thus blocking access to some of the stalls—Kelly suggests building a 12 by 24 foot grooming bay/washrack, divided into three stations, directly across the aisle from a tack room of about the same size. That way, he says, you just step across the aisle to retrieve or put away saddles and bridles. Even if you didn't plan on a washrack in your barn, Kelly says he designs grooming bays with access to water and a drain in the floor to facilitate clean-up. Most people find it's very useful to have an area where they can tie horses up securely for bathing, he says. A concrete floor with rubber mats is the budget choice, but rubber paving bricks are "the ultimate" waterproof flooring, if you can afford them.

Many of Equi-Tech's barns are equipped with a wonderfully clever feature: a lazy Susan tack wall with saddle and bridle racks. "The whole wall spins around so that your saddle and bridle are right there, and you can reach them without having to go into the tack room," Kelly says. "Then you can spin it back out of the way when you're finished in the barn. A lazy Susan tack wall will generally run you less than \$1,000 and can hold up to nine saddles.

"With show horse people, there's never enough storage," says Kelly, "so we put an upper attic above the tack room in many barns. It's great for getting bulky seasonal items—winter blankets, stall fans and so forth—out of the way.

To make tack-cleaning and wrap soaking a breeze, consider a sink with running water outside your barn. Hot water heaters are becoming a more realistic idea, and quite affordable now that there are 'on-demand' heaters that hook up to a regular cold-water faucet and provide a few gallons of hot water "pretty much immediately," Kelly says.

Remember that horses are accidents looking for a place to happen, so keep things that project out of the walls to a minimum, and choose flexible plastic or rubber containers with no sharp corners or edges to organize your grooming equipment or anything else you need close at hand.

The author is a freelance equine journalist based in Canada.