



Revaluation 2026

Miscellaneous Properties Committee

Practice Note 10

Valuation of Riding Schools, Livery Stables, Equestrian Centres and Other Quasi-agricultural Subjects

1.0 Introduction

This Practice Note deals with the valuation of Livery Stables, Riding Schools, Equestrian Centres, Horse Racing Stables, and other Quasi-agricultural subjects.

There is a distinction between riding schools and livery stables but in practice there is often an overlap or mix of use. However, it is a Jockey Club requirement that a designated horse racing stable yard cannot offer other equestrian services such as livery and riding lessons.

The types of equestrian subjects range from small establishments in converted farm buildings occupied together with small areas of land, to much larger premises with purpose-built stables, indoor or outdoor arenas and, sometimes, full cross-country courses or gallops.

A number of riding schools begin as a paying hobby using formerly exempt agricultural buildings. Often only the use distinguishes them from agricultural buildings.

1.1 Livery Stables

A livery stable as a business concern offers facilities for owners to stable their horses often offering the following options:

Full livery - the horse is stabled, fed, watered, groomed, mucked out and exercised by the occupier of the livery yard.

Part livery - the horse is stabled, but the owner might undertake to exercise, groom, or muck out and feed, in any combination.

Stabling only (often referred to as DIY livery) - the horse is stabled; the owner is responsible for everything else.

1.2 Riding Schools

A riding school usually operates on the basis of hiring out horses or ponies on a pay per hour basis. Typically, clients go out in groups on a ride accompanied by a member of staff. More experienced riders go out in unaccompanied groups or alone. Clients may receive tuition alone or in groups from a member of staff, either in an indoor or outdoor arena

1.3 Equestrian Centres

A livery stable might keep a horse to hire out to clients, may offer hay or straw for sale, may hire out a horsebox for transport or may provide schooling or tuition. This is where the use of a livery stable and that of a riding school begins to overlap, and where there is a mixture of the two functions in large establishments they are usually entitled "equestrian centre". Livery rates will tend to be higher where there are good facilities on site or nearby.

1.4 Horse Racing Stable Yards

These subjects provide a professional service and trainers require to be licensed by the Jockey Club. They are likely to comprise specialist equipment such as horse walkers and areas where special surfaces have been prepared or laid such as grass gallops and arenas.

According to the Jockey Club, strict criteria have to be fulfilled before license applications are considered. If the owner keeps some personal racehorses, and he is not a licensed trainer, in order to qualify for official races, the racehorse must be put to a licensed trainer for a set period prior to racing.

Trainers of racehorses vary from those with a permit to train a few horses for themselves and immediate family to fully licensed trainers who may have in excess of 200 horses in training on behalf of many owners. In all cases they must satisfy the Jockey Club's strict requirements that they are suitably qualified to train racehorses and that their premises, known as a Yard, meet the standards expected for the proper care of racehorses. There is a requirement for the trainer or one of his staff to be resident on site, or very close to it, at all times. Without a license or permit, a trainer is unable to enter horses for races on any racecourse.

2.0 Basis of Valuation

- 2.1 Stables, ancillary buildings, grass gallops and grazing land should be valued using the Comparative Basis of Valuation. All weather gallops, site improvements and other rateable items, such as horsewalkers, should be valued using the Contractor's Basis of Valuation.

3.0 Survey and Measurement

- 3.1 All buildings should be measured on a Gross External Area (GEA) Basis. Site areas and details of land used for grazing, gallops and car parking should also be determined together with details of site improvements such as surfacing and floodlighting or horsewalkers, if present.

4.0 Valuation Considerations

4.1 Stables

In the absence of local rental evidence, the following rates are recommended:

General Description	NAV Rate/m ²
Purpose built with light steel portal frame and brick or block walls, or brick or block construction, with pitched or flat roof, concrete floor, electricity supply.	£15.00
Older purpose built stables, possibly the stable block of a house, with stone walls, slated roof, electricity supply.	£12.00
Purpose built with timber walls, pitched or flat roof (lined), concrete floor, electricity supply.	£12.00
Farm steading type of building used as stables. Typically stone walls, slated roof, concrete floor, electric light and water supply.	£12.00

4.2 Age and Obsolescence

The rates above are to be applied generally regardless of age and obsolescence. However, in exceptional circumstances an allowance may be appropriate.

4.3 Ancillary Buildings

Ancillary buildings are usually of similar standard to the stables and should normally be valued at the same rate. Markedly superior or inferior accommodation may be taken at rates adjusted accordingly, remembering that the property is used for stabling horses and any excessive facilities may not add to the rent the hypothetical tenant would pay. For guidance, very good quality offices or tack rooms may be taken at 1.25 times the stable rate; open stalls at 0.25 and barns at 0.33 - 0.50 times the stable rate.

4.4 Arena

The useable area of a riding arena should be a minimum size of 20m x 40m. An arena may not conform to this standard (e.g. where there are site constraints or an agricultural building has been converted to provide an indoor arena). Larger establishments may have arenas in multiples of the standard size or provide separate warm up areas. These factors should be reflected in the value applied. Arenas of below normal size should be treated on their own merit, bearing in mind that these will probably be of relatively limited use and wholly unsuitable for competitions or advanced level teaching.

4.4.1 Indoor Arena

Typically sized indoor arenas should usually be valued within the range of £3.00/m² - £6.00/m² NAV dependent on quality and location: e.g., £3.00/m² should be applied to a converted agricultural building less than 20m x 40m in size and £6.00/m² should be applied to a purpose-built facility. Consideration of quantum should be made for very large indoor arenas. Whilst there may be some superficial similarities between indoor arenas and industrial buildings, the differences are such (e.g. planning permission, quality, finish, floors, insulation along with location, access, etc.) that industrial or warehouse rates per m² are unlikely to be appropriate.

4.4.2 Outdoor Arena

In the absence of local rental evidence for similar subjects, a rate of £400/ha for the arena site value is recommended.

Surfacing and other features of outdoor arenas should usually be valued within the range of £1.50 /m² - £3.00 /m² NAV, taking the standard 20m x 40m arena at £2.00 /m² NAV as a norm.

The construction and drainage, riding surface used and associated ancillary features, such as lighting and the provision of kick boards are all factors that should be taken into account within this range of values. A lower rate should be applied for arenas smaller than the norm or with poorer or fewer ancillary features. A higher rate should be applied where the arena is significantly larger than the norm with a full range of ancillary features.

4.5 Car Parking

No addition to value will generally be required for car parking as it is deemed to be included in the building rates, however, where car parking provision is considered to be in excess of the norm, an addition in line with local evidence may be appropriate.

4.6 Grazing

Grazing and other land used solely for equestrian purposes, occupied

for a substantial part of the year, should be valued in line with local evidence of grazing rents and local agricultural land values. If no local evidence is available £400/ha NAV should be used for good grazing land. A premium rent may be paid for good grazing located within urban or peripheral urban locations. These are within easy reach and consequently travelling time and costs are cut. A rate of up to £1,200/ha may be applied in such circumstances where no local evidence is available.

4.7 Gallops

The training of racehorses requires availability of suitable gallops, although it is not necessary for the training yard to own or lease gallops.

Some horses may have to walk as much as a mile to reach the gallops, but this time is useful in itself as warm-up exercise and should not be seen as a value significant disadvantage.

4.7.1 Grass Gallops

Gallops may seem nothing more than a strip of grass which may run for a mile or more along the side of a track or road and, possibly, adjoining arable or meadow land. However, good grass gallops take from 8 to 15 years to create and involve the removal of all stones or similar sharp objects.

The gallops are sown with a mixture of moss and special grasses, grown to a density not found in the average garden or meadow, to provide a thick 'carpet' on which it is safe to gallop a thoroughbred racehorse without it risking an injury.

Not surprisingly, grass gallops require considerable maintenance including rolling and cutting and the replacement of divots. As a result, they are costly to maintain.

Gallops are well prepared and maintained stretches of grassland used for the exercise and training of racehorses. The better gallops will be situated on upwardly sloping land where the horses can be made to "work". The training of National Hunt horses takes place during the winter and the land may be used for sheep or mowing during the summer (cattle would not be grazed as their heavier weight may damage the carefully prepared surface).

If a grass gallop is substantially used for agricultural purposes: e.g., as sheep pasture for example; and the only other use is exercising horses, it should not enter the roll [Valuation and Rating (Scotland) Act 1956 Section 7(2B)]. If not exempt, and there is no local evidence, a rate of £2,000/ha NAV is recommended.

4.7.2 All-Weather Gallops

The term “all-weather gallop” can be ambiguous, but it is usually used to describe a strip of land about 3 metres wide, where the topsoil has been removed and replaced with a surface such as wood shavings. It is very unlikely that this can be considered to be “agricultural land”.

All-weather gallops have been in use since the 19th century; however their popularity has increased in more recent years.

The following costs should be used to reflect surfacing of all weather gallops:

Sand or Woodchip

SURFACE	UNIT COST RATE/m²
Sand	£22.00
Woodchip	£33.00

Flexi Fibre/Rubber

Specialist surfaces such as Shredded Rubber, Rubber Chippings or Flexi Fibre may be valued by reference to Equine Gallops unit cost rates in the Rating Cost Guide Scotland. In general, the following rates may be applied to all such surfacing:

COST GUIDE REFERENCE	DEPTH	UNIT COST RATE/m²
61E19A	50mm	£41.00
61E20A	100mm	£45.00

4.8 Horsecwalkers

With ever increasing labour costs, some trainers have decided to use horsecwalkers as a means of exercising several horses at once. The original walkers attached the horse by a short chain from its head collar to a rotating arm. Modern “loose walkers” have the horse walking within a confined fenced area. They are circular areas between 10m - 20m diameter and must have a stabilised base (often concrete) for the horse to walk on; they may have permanent walls and a roof, and ‘paddles’ on the rotating arms to ensure the horse moves around the walker. They are built in various sizes and designs but all operate by means of an electric motor, which is designed to cut-out in the event of the horse stopping.

Horsecwalkers with an earth base only with rotating arm gear from a central electric motor will probably be de minimis in value terms. Where a concrete base is present it should be valued by reference to the Rating Cost Guide Scotland.

More substantial structures with permanent walls and roof should be valued by reference to Equine Horsewalker unit cost rates in the Rating Cost Guide Scotland.

4.9 Costs

All costs stated above are inclusive of contract size, fees and have been adjusted for location in accordance with SAA Contractor's Basis Valuation Practice Note. Cost Guide unit cost rate adjustments will be required in respect of location factor, where appropriate, contract size and fees.

The appropriate statutory decapitalisation rate should be applied.

4.10 Other Quasi-Agricultural Subjects

There are many other varied uses of land and buildings that raise similar questions to equestrian centres and can be loosely termed quasi-agricultural. A similar approach should be taken in valuing most other such subjects.

Farm diversification over recent years has seen the expansion of farm shops, craft workshops, farm tearooms, etc., as leisure destinations. In these cases, the available rental evidence will assist in deriving the appropriate rate/m² (refer to the SAA Valuation of Shops Practice Note, paragraph 8).

Agricultural Research Centres should be valued in accordance with the SAA Valuation of Universities, Colleges and other Institutes of Higher & Further Education Practice Note. If, however, the centre is in reality, an unadapted farm, then local rental evidence for farms should be used. The rental evidence would include normal farm buildings.

Farmshops should be valued in accordance with the SAA Valuation of Visitor Attractions Practice Note.

Any other buildings should be valued using the Contractor's Basis in accordance with the recommendations of the SAA Contractor's Basis Valuations Practice Note.