

Your Dream-Barn Planning Guide

How to develop a barn
that works for *you*.

By Maureen Gallatin



Built for You
**Wick
Buildings®**
by Wick Building Systems, Inc.

Introduction

As an experienced horse person and the editor of *Perfect Horse* for 10 years, I've visited a lot of farms and ranches. I particularly enjoy having people tell me about their barns — what they like and what they'd like to change. Most people went into their barn-building project with several elements clearly in mind. They knew, for instance, they wanted a tack room near the cross ties, a shower in the bathroom, or feed windows on the stalls.

But many didn't know what they were getting into when it came to water runoff, or the endless problems of keeping the stall doors from sticking, or how to keep the barn cool in summer. In many cases, features they now like the best had been recommended by their barn builder, such as the neat tool-storage option or the drop-down windows on the stall doors.

Some folks told me of their great builder or the company they bought their barn from, but far too many told me not-so-wonderful stories — about what was “not included” in their barn packages, or of problems that required expensive fixes later on. For instance, imagine rolling the barn door open only to have it fall off the track because the builder didn't put a stop on it. Or finding out the hard way that the fence is just too close to get the tractor around the corner.

“If we knew then what we know now...”

When I had the opportunity to write this guide and to work with the people at Wick Buildings, I was thrilled, because I know of their solid reputation. If you don't already know the Wick name, keep your ears open, because you'll hear plenty of happy customers talking about their good experiences — both ordinary horse owners like you and me, and big-name professionals who work in their barns all day, every day.

Enjoy working your way through this guide. It's designed to help you to organize your thinking. Then give the people at Wick Buildings a call to talk with them about your dream barn.

Maureen

Maureen Gallatin

Inspired by Horses

Editor-at-Large, Perfect Horse Magazine

P.S. Drop by my blog — Carrots for Courage — www.onmyhorse.com, and let me know how your project is coming along.

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Your dream barn may be a modest structure in your backyard, or include a fancy indoor arena.

Your Dream-Barn Planning Guide

Whether you're planning for two horses in your backyard or a major training facility, a barn is at the heart of your operation.

If you're like most people, you've visited other barns, talked with horse owners about what they do and don't like, clipped photos from magazines, and perhaps sent

for barn information. Like most horse owners, you know what you want when it comes to some aspects, but other important considerations are probably flying below your radar.

Most people are good at the generalities, but the overall cost, quality, and usefulness of a finished building depends on lin-

ing up the details. One common mistake is planning without the advice of an expert. Sometimes

people think they'll save time or money by doing all the planning themselves, only contacting a builder for the barn itself. Or they may inadvertently expect a barn builder to also be

a mind reader. The trick is do enough pre-planning that an expert can understand what you want — and this guide will help you to do that. That will minimize frustration and reduce expenses during the building process, as anyone who has remodeled a kitchen can attest.

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✂ **A BARN ISN'T
JUST A HORSE
HOUSE. IT'S A
PLACE WHERE
DREAMS COME TO
LIFE.** ✂



Think about your barn plan in terms of its traffic pattern — for horses as well as vehicles.

Using the Worksheets

The heart of this planning guide is the worksheet section. This tool will help you to clarify your thinking and to translate your dreams into a form that will help your barn builder to see your vision.

If you're feeling a little overwhelmed about the process, these worksheets will help you get all those loose-end thoughts pinned down. Then the planning will shift gears into the fun stage.

There are two main pages — one says, "Most important to me" and the other says, "Nice to have." Together, they'll become your planning report. The other pages will help you determine your priorities and think the project through from various angles. You'll be making lots of changes, so we'd suggest using a pencil.

To give you an idea how this process works, let's assume that having a place to store tack and feed is really important to you. And, it would be really

nice if that could be two separate storage rooms, rather than one shared by tack and feed. Or perhaps you're sure you want a round pen. Covering that round pen would be a dream come true. A round pen is "important"; a cover for the round pen is "nice."

When you talk with a good barn builder about the overall facility, matters such as drainage, zoning codes, fly systems, manure disposal, insulation, ventilation, and such will take their place alongside your preferences in landscaping and stall hardware. This guide is specifically about planning a barn, but you have to consider the entire farm to put the barn into perspective. We'll touch on farm planning, but then we'll zero in on the barn itself.

No doubt you're eager to get started, so go to pages 10 and 11 and start to work on your wish list. Jot down what comes to mind right off the bat. *more* ➔



Consider what you can do to cut down on labor, such as designing stalls that open directly into paddocks, so horses can go in and out on their own.

Using the Worksheets *continued*

1. Big Picture Thoughts

Imagine yourself driving into your dream farm. What do you see? What do you feel? What will you do when you get there? You'll have to use words to communicate your vision to someone else, so actually writing down your answers will save you time and effort in the long run.

Pretend you're talking about your farm to a friend who lives across the country and who doesn't know anything about horses. Give him a bird's-eye view, but with enough detail so he can see the picture.

For instance, "It's a breeding farm," might mean one thing to you, but another to someone else, so you'll have to be a little more specific. Does that mean you stand two stallions, have many mares coming and going with vet trucks pulling in daily? Or do you have a few mares and three generations of their foals?

If you said, "We want a family farm," does that mean a barn, riding ring, and picnic table? Or are you planning to have goats, chickens, and Dexter cattle, too?

Take a few moments to write your big-picture thoughts on page 12.

2. Think "Systems" and Movement

Horse farms are centers of activity. Think of all the things that move, then continue to add relevant features to your worksheets. Here are some ideas to get you thinking:

- Horses in and out of stalls, turned out, brought in, tacked up, tied up, and ridden
- People in and out of the office, tack room, bathroom, stalls, and vehicles
- Muck buckets and wheelbarrows being pushed into stalls and down the barn aisle
- Manure spreaders doing their thing
- Vets, farriers, clients, guests, and family coming and going
- Tractors hauling hay, plowing snow, or scraping the driveway
- Trailers getting loaded and leaving for horse shows
- Semi-trailer bringing hay
- Garbage truck lifting dumpster
- Vets and farriers parking by the barn door
- Kids' bicycles making unauthorized invasions into the barn area
- You making late-night checks of the barn

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BARN SYSTEMS

The keyword for any horse owner and for Wick Building Systems is "systems." Jeff Wick, son of the founder, told us that his dad's passion was working with farmers to take the physical drudgery out of farming. "It was our building, but the customer's system," he said.

Older barns with narrow doorways and aisles were fine when people moved hay by hand, but by the mid-1950s, the development of a tractor with a front-end loader made doing the job quicker — if the tractor could get where it needed to be. The challenge was to design a building that would make the farmer's job easier. Doing that meant John F. Wick had to go out to a farm, watch what the farmer did, measure distances, and find ways that a building could accommodate the farmer's system.

"The whole Wick culture dates back to that farm boy's desire to serve customers, and now, 50-plus years later, we're still doing the same thing. We still get a kick out of serving the customer, and

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Providing for seating alongside an arena is a good idea for both private and commercial operations.

Using the Worksheets *continued*

- And of course, the dog, who's either in constant motion or on the wrong side of a door

Thinking of your operation in dynamic terms will lead you to make wise decisions and to plan a facility that will "work for you."

3. What's Your Plan?

When you're planning a farm, you have to think expansively. How might you want your operation to grow? Or how should you position the property so someone else can grow the enterprise? Many horse owners start out with one picture, but later decide they want to add stalls to accommodate their retired horses or stable a few boarders. Or they initially think that having an arena is sufficient, but later want to add a covered round pen.

What happens if you change disciplines or take on boarders who ride a style different from your own? As an example, as we baby

boomers age, we're discovering the fun of teaching our old show horses to drive. You'll save money in the long run by thinking all that through with someone who knows how those things best lay out.

For instance, it's less expensive to run power and water into the same trench than separately, so if you're thinking that you might eventually want an additional building someplace where you're running water, an expert can advise you about what else should be done at the same time. If you're planning to raise foals, you might think about a closed-circuit TV down the road, or at least wiring the facility so you can take advantage of new technologies.

4. Legalities

Best to face any legalities right up front. Due to permits, environmental concerns, zoning, and so forth, the barn you build today

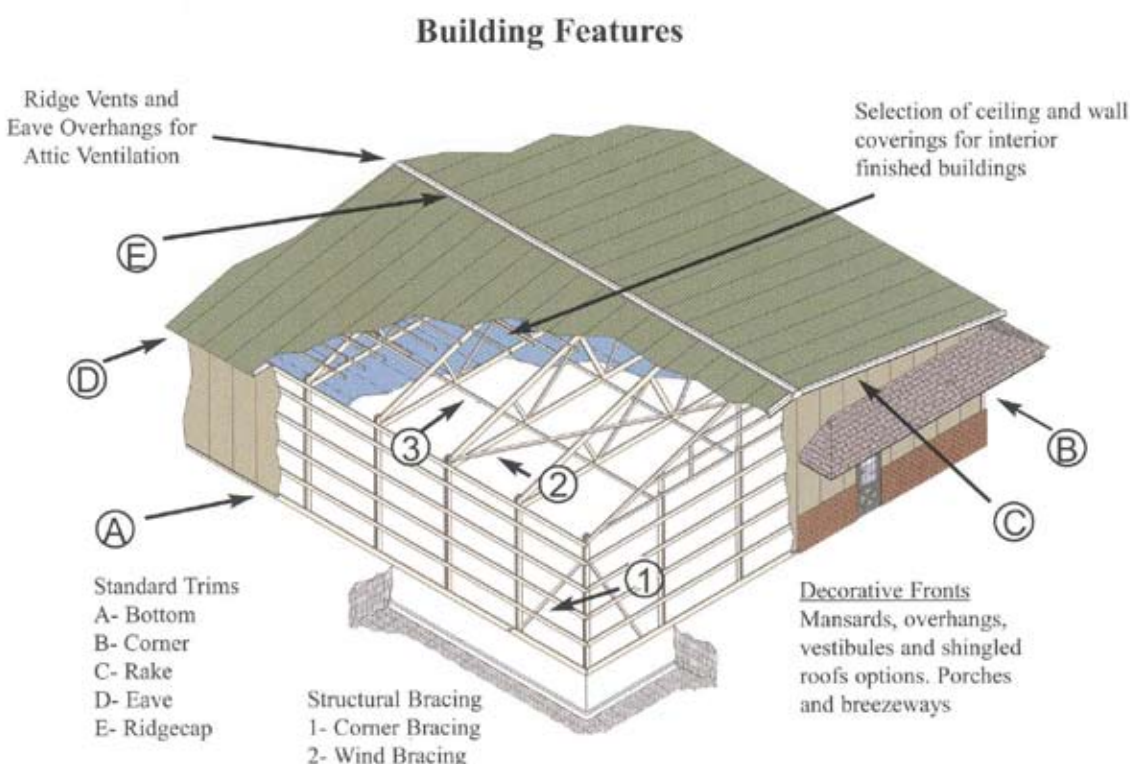
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coming up with a way to build something so the customer says, "Wow. This is great!"

Tom Bunbury, the manager of Carriage Ridge in Wisconsin, recently ran into Jeff Wick and told him, "After 10 years, we're still delighted with our building and the workability of the systems. It works well, and serves our purposes well. It's been durable and looks good."

Bunbury went on to say something extremely important: "You should do some kind of follow-up on existing projects. You guys don't sell on the basis of lowest price. You sell on the basis of value, and we feel that we got really good value."

Those key concepts — good value, works well, serves our purposes, is durable, and looks good — are what every horse owner wants in his or her barn and are the motivating guidelines for each Wick project.



A good builder will walk you through the structural elements, so you end up planning a barn that's well-ventilated and a joy to work in.

Using the Worksheets *continued*

has a lot more concerns than if you were building the same barn 10 years ago. Knowing how to navigate today's waters with the least amount of cost or pain is a whole lot different than deciding where to put the saddle racks in the tack room.

What use is the property zoned for? Are there any covenants or restrictions you have to work around? How about environmental compliance, an increasingly high-profile consideration?

Beyond the letter of the law, think through good neighborhood relations. How will you situate your facility so your neighbors will be least inconvenienced by dust or that giant dusk-to-dawn light you are planning to use?

5. Site Selection

How and where you put the barn on your property has a lot to do with the quality of the finished barn and even its cost. You

should come up with your preliminary plan (as you're doing by working through this guide). But unless you've done a lot of building, you really need the help of someone who "knows the lay of the land," literally.

For instance, the untrained eye sees land that seems flat, while an expert recognizes a few degrees incline that will make a huge difference in terms of drainage. (Most people think of an arena as flat, but an arena that drains correctly has a slight slope.)

In that same way, if your nearly flat pasture happens to drain toward your building site, you'll be dealing with water issues for years. Preparing for runoff before you begin to build will save you a lot of money and aggravation.

Beyond that, you'll want to take into account such matters as wind, weather, and accessibility. Can you take advantage of a

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THE BUILDER'S CONTRIBUTION

Joe Wilson of Wilson Buildings in Oregonia, Ohio, a Wick Builder, emphasizes that there's no substitute for experience when it comes to building a barn. He says though people may have read books and visited other barns, they're always pleased when he suggests options they haven't considered.

One of the most important has to do with ventilation. Joe often recommends ventilated soffits and ridge vents. That way, cool air is drawn in, and heated air escapes out the top of the building, preventing the air in the barn from getting stale and keeping the temperature more comfortable.

Many people wonder how to store hay, since they may not want to put it in a loft above the stalls for heat or dust reasons, and they don't have the space or

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Think in terms of a "bird's-eye view" to get an overall picture of your operation. That will help in terms of traffic flow, parking, and placement of fences.

Using the Worksheets *continued*

summer breeze without the barn aisle becoming a wind tunnel in winter? Can the hay truck make it up your driveway and unload easily, or will you be hauling hay bale by bale into the barn? And on it goes. All this goes back to the keyword, “systems.”

The first rule is, “Don’t fight the land.” No doubt, you’ll have to do some grading for the barn and arena footprint, but it’s best to not fight nature. The idea of having a beautiful arena at the top of a hill sounds great — until you realize that it doesn’t have any shade, will always be windy, and you’ll have to fight water erosion on the hillside where you’ve excavated.

On the other hand, tucking your barn down in a hollow sounds romantic, until you realize you’ll always have to trek down to the barn (even when it’s icy), and it will be hard to keep any paddocks near the barn dry.

To help narrow the focus slightly, you can start by asking other questions, such as, “How close by are the utilities?” That will get you thinking down a practical track.

Your mind will then think of power, water, phone, cell-phone coverage, and maybe even Internet access. Such issues as power poles or underground utilities may come to mind. You’ll then move on to driveways, the size of vehicles you’ll have to maneuver, and so forth.

Think beyond the barn to other structures or work areas, such as arenas, paddocks, dry lots, hot walkers, or maybe even a vegetable garden to make the best use of that compost pile.

Think all that through, remembering that staging areas, such as outside an arena or a trailer-loading spot require more space than you might think at first.

Jot all that onto your worksheets, so that your builder can help you see what fits best on your property. You might find yourself working in stages — the barn and hay-storage building now and an equipment-storage shed two years from now. Once the overall plan is in place, you can narrow down what you’re actually going to do with your barn.

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budget to build a separate storage building. The solution may be to add 12 feet across the end of the barn beyond the stalls to accommodate easy access.

Think about nuisances, too. Barn builders can suggest extras, such as bird screenings, that can be added along the eaves where the soffits and side walls meet to prevent birds from nesting on the roof overhang.

Then there are an endless number of stall or accessory options, such as Dutch doors, which give horses more room to move around since they can put their heads out the over the stall door.

And if children or people unfamiliar with horses will be helping at the barn, you might consider swing-out feeders or water buckets, so they don’t have to enter the stalls to give the horses feed or water. So much depends on personal preference and budget, but an experienced barn builder is often able to suggest options that really work.



No matter how simple or deluxe your barn, think in terms of it working for the horses as well as for the people involved.

Using the Worksheets *continued*

6. Size, Shape and Accessories

Now the planning gets fun. You get to say how many stalls you want, and what amenities they may have, such as attached runs or movable partitions.

Imagine yourself at feeding time. What's your routine? Are you feeding hay from a wheelbarrow or the back of a utility vehicle? And when it's time for stall cleaning, will you be driving the manure spreader through the barn and dumping soiled bedding right into it, or will you be wheeling a muck bucket around?

Stall door options are endless: European style or carriage top? Wood, galvanized, or powder coated? If you have a Miniature Horse, how about putting in a full mesh, so he can see into the barn aisle like the big horses do? Remember, horses are happier when they can see out, especially if they can see another horse.

How wide do you want the aisle, grooming area, size of the roof overhang? Need an on-demand hot water heater? Start writing down all those little extras that you've been dreaming about, from that neat stall door

latch to the built-in cabinets and the recessed spot where you intend to hang your tools.

How about a private office, or at least a place to eat your sandwich away from barn dust? Buzz through our brain-teaser lists to get yourself both dreaming and realistic. Just remember to separate what's really important from the that-would-be-nice list.

7. Visiting Other Barns

Now that you've done your brainstorming, it's time to visit other barns that might be similar to what you're dreaming about. Begin by looking around as you drive in the driveway — what's your overall impression? Would you have enough room if you were driving a long trailer?

Continue throughout, paying attention to what you like and what you wouldn't want to live with. Ask the owners what they'd change if they were doing it again. Maybe even ask if they'd mind you taking snapshots of aspects you think are particularly appropriate for your barn. When you get back to the car, jot down your impressions on the worksheets, because it'll be harder to remember the specifics later.

Ready to get started?

Turn the page, and put your dreams on paper.



Planning all the little conveniences is the most fun of the whole process. Consider what you might like to add later on, even if it's not in your budget right now.

Brainstorming Tools

Use these lists to help you think through your operation from various perspectives and traffic patterns.

Barn-Related Activities (How are you going to...)

- Lead horses in and out of stalls, evacuate in a hurry
- Negotiate horses going in and out of pastures/turnout
- Feed (vehicles, carts, hand carry, etc.)
- Water (automatic, water lines, hoses, turnoff valves, etc.)
- Blanket and store blankets during the day
- Groom, tack up, hold horse for farrier, vet (cross ties, grooming stalls, wash rack, etc.)
- Perform first aid, take care of injured horses, isolate horses, etc.
- Clean the aisle (sweeping, blowing, etc.)
- Open/close stall doors
- Open/close stall windows — from inside stall or outside
- Clean stalls (muck buckets, wheelbarrows, utility vehicles, etc.)
- Lead two horses at once
- Meet clients (office, phone, etc.)
- Hang out with friends, conduct a class, etc. (place to sit, coffee pot)
- Store vaccines, drugs, etc. (refrigerator)
- Wash up (hands, barn laundry, shower, etc.)
- Store feed (hay, grains, supplements — mixing area)
- Store boarders' tack (tack trunks, lockers, saddle racks, etc.)
- Store your tack (easy access, bridle racks, saddles, etc.)
- Store off-season blankets, fly masks and seldom-used tack
- Clean barn (dusting, cobwebs, power wash, etc.)
- Disinfect barn
- Control flies
- Provide for dog/cat feeding

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CONTACTING A BUILDER

If you've followed along this far and have your two sheets filled in, you're ready to talk with a barn builder. We asked Wick Buildings how a partnership with them works. They told us:

When you contact Wick Buildings by phone or online, we'll send out a brochure packet, along with the phone number for the Wick Builder in your neighborhood. We have 180 builders across the country, and even if there isn't someone in your hometown, we can help you.

When you talk with the builder about your project, he or she will perform a needs assessment on the phone to find out what you're looking for in a building and if Wick is a fit for you.

From there, you can set up an appointment to walk your property with the builder and determine the best situation for your horse complex. We don't want to just sell you a building. We want to help you ascertain where your barn construction dollars will be best spent. We understand you have individual needs based on the breed or use of your horses. There are many accessories to choose from, some of which are functional, and others that reflect your personal tastes and design preferences.

We'll take your preferences and include our extensive experience in planning buildings that are safe, workable, and appealing. Our goal is to put together the best building package possible. Depending on the complexity of

Brainstorming Tools *(continued)*

Farm-Related Activities *(How are you going to manage...)*

- Signs (welcome, parking, etc.)
- Incoming/outgoing traffic, parking
- Trailer parking, loading and unloading horses
- Tractor, equipment storage
- Storage of bedding
- Opening and closing gates
- Turnout of horses (traffic pattern, water, mowing, rotation of pastures, fertilizing, pasture management, etc.)
- Manure storage (ease of dumping after stall cleaning, composting, dumpster, etc.)
- Manure disposal (spreading, gardeners picking up, etc.)
- Landscaping
- Snow removal

Structures Other Than Main Barn

- Housing for people
- Hay storage
- Bedding storage
- Equipment storage
- Jump storage
- Run-in sheds
- Storage of supplies, fencing, etc.
- Trailer-parking shed
- Breeding shed
- Arena or round pen — covered, enclosed, or fenced
- Cattle chutes
- Dog kennel, runs
- Tool sheds
- Picnic area

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the project, we can typically have a barn plan to you within a couple of weeks. (Some smaller project proposals turn around in just a few days.) We'll develop a detailed floor plan and elevations to give you a look and feel for your new barn, and we'll present a proposal with several options.

When you meet with your builder, he or she will also talk about other issues that might affect your barn project, including local zoning and building ordinances. Many horse barns today are being built on small acreages adjacent to other kinds of residential properties, so there may be set-back requirements and other rules to consider. By staying up-to-date on local zoning laws, our builders can design a project that works with the neighborhood, so you won't be disappointed by developing plans for a barn that you won't be allowed to build.

We'll discuss the proposal with you and incorporate any changes that you'd like to make. When you're ready to go ahead, you and your Wick builder will walk the site again, laying out the building with flags and stakes. This will give you a sense of the overall project, so you're comfortable with it and secure in the knowledge that everything will fit and work the way you want it to.

Your builder will also assist you in getting through the permit and zoning process. Sometimes, certain buildings require "special use" permits, and there's a whole process for getting approval. If a permit is needed, our engineering department will prepare the

Brainstorming Tools *(continued)*

Different Operations:

- Training barn
 - Boarding barn
 - Private riding barn
 - Mare motel
 - Stallion barn
 - Sale barn
 - Show barn
 - Small operation vs. large
 - Multiple trainers or disciplines
 - Competitions (horse shows, games, etc.)
 - Roping — activities involving cattle
 - Multi-animal facilities (llama, goat, dog breeding, etc.)
 - Live-in options
 - Gather for trail ride
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What's legal?

- Zoning
 - Covenants
 - Number of horses, buildings allowed
 - Height of buildings
 - Distance from the road or property lines
 - Permits
 - Environmental compliance
 - Future expansion possibilities
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stamped structural drawings so they're ready for submission to your local building department.

When all that's behind us and you've made whatever changes you want to the plan, we'll process the order, get final layouts drafted, order materials, and schedule the construction crew. We'll manufacture, load, and deliver your barn at the time the crew is ready to start building it.

While we're manufacturing your barn, your builder will be preparing the site, including excavation. Some of our builders also get involved with putting in fences and roads, and developing your complete horse set-up.

But maybe all you want is a building. That's fine too. We're glad to design a building that meets your needs. And that's when Wick's barn-building expertise will be a special bonus.

Even if you've boarded horses for years, you may not be aware of the many details that go into a finished barn project. We do our best to walk you through the process. That way you can make any necessary changes early on. Often our builders will come up with some good ideas that maybe you haven't thought completely through yet. For instance, it sometimes surprises horse owners that we recommend insulating the roof, especially if it's metal, even though the building is not going to be heated. If the roof isn't insulated, moisture will take the form of condensation, dripping down on the horses and everything else.

We like to stress that once you've decided which builder

Brainstorming Tools *(continued)*

Site Selection

- Drainage, water runoff
- Location and availability of water
- Proximity to utilities
- Wind and sunshine
- Proximity to the road (privacy, access for emergency vehicles)
- Proximity to the house (privacy, visibility, convenience)
- Dust control

Major Barn/Farm Features to Think About

- Entrance — width, access from road, slope, landscaping
- Driveway — length, surface, design, lighting, shoulders, landscaping
- Parking, turnaround area
- Farrier/veterinarian parking areas and access to barn
- Exterior barn lighting
- Barn entrance — lighting, doors, footing, access to light switches, hitching post, landscaping
- Barn aisle — width, floor surface, lighting, aisle storage (tack trunks, etc.)
- Stall doors — material, size, width, sliders, latches
- Stall door accessories — blanket bar, name plate, halter hanger
- Movable stall partitions (foaling stalls)
- Water sources — hydrants, waterers, hose connections
- Barn lighting — skylights, aisle lights, individual stalls, metal cages over light bulbs
- Tie areas — cross ties, tie rings, grooming ties
- Outlet placement for fans, clippers, vacuum
- Emergency power, generator
- Hayloft
- Water storage, water heater
- Hot-water locations — bathroom, sink, wash stall

and company you want to work with, spend enough time to be thorough in the planning process. The sooner any changes are made, the less expensive they'll be. Early on, the only real impact is whatever the item costs, such as adding a cupola. Further into the process, there might be engineering charges, as well. Of course, if you make a change that affects the footprint of the building, then you're into excavation work, and on it goes.

Part of preparing the site is being ready for the amount of disturbance to the immediate property. There's no way of getting around semi-trailers and big equipment coming on to the site. So even though there's a nice house on the property, we recommend holding off on landscaping until all the heavy work is done.

And if there's one area that's especially important to consider, it's the levelness of the site. Water is the enemy of an equine building, and the slope of a few inches makes a big difference.

If you prefer to use your own builder, we're flexible. We caution that there's a normal learning curve in working with our buildings — they're a little different than conventional construction. Even an experienced master carpenter will likely take longer to build the barn than a Wick Builder who has done a number of them, which may factor into your builder's fee. However, we're glad to supply a drawing packet that's easily understood by experienced builders and phone numbers of our engineering department.

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Barn Visit Notes

Barn visited _____

Owned by _____

Its purpose _____

Details (number of horses, acres, etc.) _____

What I liked most about it _____

What I would change _____

What the owners said they'd change if doing it all over again _____

Other notes _____

Barn visited _____

Owned by _____

Its purpose _____

Details (number of horses, acres, etc.) _____

What I liked most about it _____

What I would change _____

What the owners said they'd change if doing it all over again _____

Other notes _____

If you're thinking of buying a barn and are curious about what sets Wick Buildings apart from our competitors, consider these things:

1. We know horses, and we know how to build barns that work for horses and their owners. The health and safety of the horse is our first priority, so we go the extra mile to be sure to make our barns super horse-friendly. For instance, there are rounded edges instead of sharp corners, wherever possible.

2. We know horse people. We understand the needs of different disciplines and barn uses. We know the horse-care traffic patterns. So we can help you design something that "works for you."

3. Our materials are top notch. For instance, the paint coating on our siding is superior, more durable, and carries a better warranty than most anything out there. Our high-tensile-strength steel is about twice as resistant to hail than that used by most of our competitors. And we could look at item after item for durability and utility. A horse barn is a big investment, and we think it should look good and work well for years to come.

4. Our warranty and how we back it up is outstanding. It's who we are. When people talk with us, see our product, realize we have hundreds of floor plans to choose from, when they talk with our satisfied customers and hear about our customer service, we don't have to say any more. They know we can deliver the product that they'll be proud to own.



