



Diversification is key: some rent out their arenas for dog agility or beach volleyball

Other big venues are focusing on riding camps as their main revenue stream.

"Some places do them week in, week out," says Cheryl. "Adult riding camps are particularly popular these days. If you can find a niche, that's even better. People are more likely to travel a bit further for a confidence camp or a discipline-specific one."

CHOOSING the right business idea for the property is just the start, though. A common mistake Cheryl sees is opening too quickly.

"People buy an equestrian property and rush into what they're doing," she says.

"You need the permissions in place. You need to sit on it for a while and make sure the standard of everything is up to scratch."

Cheryl always reminds clients that an equestrian business is exactly that, a business.

"A lot of people open yards because they are horse people," she says. "Then they realise they are not business people and they're not people either."

She also warns that going for the most expensive and best of everything isn't always a guarantee of success.

"If you set up a bells-and-whistles, high-end yard, there is scope to charge more," she says. "But you have to work harder. I know people who have yards that are out of this world, but they don't make any money because it costs them so much to keep it maintained and have someone running their social media for them."

This can also be problematic if it comes to selling up as buyers will want proof of a viable business, warns John Coleman.

"Overinvested equestrian set-ups are certainly struggling to recoup even their initial build-cost values and there

is market evidence to support this.

Trading accounts are becoming ever more important, given more dependence on commercial lending."

ULTIMATELY, to make the most from your equestrian property, Cheryl encourages owners to think around their main revenue stream.

"If you have a livery yard, do facility hire or become a base for a riding club," she says. "It doesn't even have to be equestrian-related. A lot of people rent out arenas for dog agility and one lady I know rents hers out for beach volleyball."

She also recommends creating units on your property that can be rented out to other small businesses.

"Some people have an equine physio working out of their yard," she says.

"I know one couple in Hampshire who rented a unit on their yard to a dog groomer, which is a good example of thinking laterally."

Megan Wright agrees: "Diversification is the word of the day. Many owners are blending two or three complementary operations – for example, running a livery yard alongside holiday accommodation or combining retirement livery with equine therapy programmes."

Cheryl's final piece of advice to anyone looking to run a business from their equestrian property is to set clear boundaries, to help maintain a clear work-life balance.

"Favours can be your downfall. Someone messaging you at 9pm every night to change their horse's rug will become an issue," she says. "When people are coming to your home every day, it can be easy to make friendships that might backfire. Therefore, always think of them as your clients." **H&H**

"Always think of them as your clients"

CHERYL JOHNS ON SETTING A WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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