

well, maintaining grazing in the winter can be little short of a nightmare, but providing turnout during these months is also vital for equine wellbeing.

"Horses without turnout can end up stir-crazy," she says. "Any equestrian with soil that doesn't drain well will find that it becomes a deep claggy nightmare and this destroys the grass root structure and makes for a miserable time for horses. Muddy conditions lead to mud fever, waterlogged hooves and thrush, not to mention lost wellies and stuck wheelbarrows. Therefore, careful planning and management are essential to make the best of what you have."

Kerry adds that because grass doesn't grow in cold temperatures, hay feeding stations outside will be necessary, and the ground around these (and in any other high traffic areas, such as shelters and gateways) can easily become poached.

"Creating hardstanding areas is vital if the mud is bad, and there are various temporary, semi-permanent and

New owners should request some of the forage from their horse's previous home and mix it in with their own for a while



permanent options available for this. I have found that whatever product equestrians put down, it will always have mud and manure brought onto it, so a topping like sand or wood chip is strongly advised," adds Kerry, who also advises rotating grazing if possible and allowing paddocks to rest.

"Lots of people create 'sacrifice paddocks' so that most of their land can recover through the wet months and then provide good grazing once the weather improves," she says. "Track systems, or larger 'loafing areas', are good solutions in these cases, as is the Equicentral System that incorporates paddocks too."

The right recipe

Feed and bedding decisions will also need to be made with a new horse.

"This is where good communication with the previous owner is so helpful," says Natalie Passmore. "Ask them what the horse was being fed and bedded on and stick to that for a while."

Model behaviour?

When it comes to the move, equine behaviour consultant Dr Debbie Marsden says that it isn't the change of yard itself that is particularly stressful for the horse.

"Horses have evolved to roam over vast areas, so a change of scene is unlikely to be stressful. However, their social nature means that changing companions is a major stressor." This goes for their human as well as their equine companions.

"Even a slight difference in how they're handled can cause confusion and leave them with a lot to learn in a short time.



IT'S ALL IN THE PLANNING

Planning permission is required by anyone constructing equestrian facilities, and in some cases even just using the land to keep horses.

"We find that many people don't realise this," says Eleni Marshall, director of The Equestrian Planning Consultancy. "Often they've purchased land with a property that is categorised as agricultural, but horses can't come under the definition of agriculture if they're being fed and cared for in a manner that's living on the land rather than living off of it.

"Any new permanent building or stabling within a field will always require planning permission as a building is, by definition, development," adds Eleni. "However, in some cases, field shelters don't require planning permission, but they must be truly mobile and moved on a regular

basis. They should also be capable of being moved with a standard 4x4 and not specialist equipment."

And, as Eleni points out, it isn't just buildings that may come under the planning umbrella.

"Arenas, hardstanding and muck heaps (formally constructed) would all come under the definition of development and would all need planning permission," she says.

Electric fencing isn't a permanent construction and so doesn't fall under development, but the regulations for other types of fencing may need to be investigated, depending on location.

"There is scope to construct fencing under permitted development, but there are certain restrictions that people should be aware of, such as the height of fencing adjacent to a highway or around a listed building," adds Eleni.