



Whether a few acres or a yard with all the facilities, there's scope to build a business – from livery to a competition centre

ANOTHER alternative to more traditional livery businesses is holiday accommodation.

"It's a small but growing market," says John Coleman, head of farm and country estate agency at GSC Grays.

Horsemanship trainer Will Hunt and his partner Laura Thyer converted old barns into holiday accommodation on their Bircher Farm Stud, so that Will could offer residential training camps to his clients.

"From there, it was a natural step to open the farm up for horse holidays, allowing riders to bring their horses," says Laura.

She credits the farm's location – on the Herefordshire, Shropshire and Welsh border – as a key part of its success as a holiday business.

"Guests love the fact that they can enjoy training, ride out in stunning scenery, then explore everything the area has to offer," she explains.

Laura points out that offering holiday accommodation is more people-focused than any other livery.

"Hosting is time-consuming, but it's also incredibly rewarding," she says. "And

the holiday accommodation directly supports Will's training work."

Will agrees: "We've tried to create a place where horses and riders can learn, relax and make memories together."

WHILE the livery market continues to evolve in different directions, Cheryl has also noticed a trend for venues that specialise in hire facilities only.

"I'm seeing some purely training or competition venues, with no horses

few fences for rings. The decision to focus on facilities was a practical one at the time.

"I had a full-time job, so it was a weekend project, hence the show venue route," she remembers.

Jane took her time upgrading to the multiple arena set-up it is now.

"We did a lot of research on the surface," she says. "We visited many venues and spoke to almost every company. Our warm-ups are also a good size, something all the competitors appreciate."

The venue now has a clubhouse with a café and tack shop.

"I'm a great believer that you never stand still in business – you're either progressing or falling behind," says Jane. "The other thing I've learnt is

always to grab every opportunity that is thrown your way."

For Jane, the decision to focus on events and facilities hire has been the right one.

"I'm not going to lie, on a Sunday evening as the last lorry drives out of the gate, it's a relief to know the event has gone well and I look forward to a 'quiet' Monday," she says. "We all know that horses are a 24-7-365 job, but at least with a show centre you can plan the occasional day off."

"I've learnt to grab every opportunity that is thrown your way"

JANE GREGORY, FROM CHARD EQUESTRIAN, ON PROGRESSING YOUR BUSINESS

on-site," she notes. "With enough land, you can put in multiple arenas, cross-country courses and summer jumping paddocks. If you do it properly, events can provide a good income and there's potential to expand, for example, by having a tack shop and restaurant on-site."

Chard Equestrian, on the Somerset and Devon borders, has done exactly that. Owner Jane Gregory started the business in 2013, when it was a grass field with a

Don't forget!

Megan Wright, of Michael Graham Estate Agents, says these are the considerations that buyers mustn't overlook...

- planning permissions and business-use consents
- local authority regulations, particularly for change of use or expansion

- access for large vehicles, such as horseboxes and deliveries
- soil type and drainage, which directly impact pasture management
- staffing and accommodation for employees, especially when in more remote locations

And when it comes to selling a property with business potential, she advises the

following to maximise the selling price...

- keeping business accounts and occupancy records up to date for credibility
- presenting the property well, both facilities and branding
- highlighting unique selling points, such as proximity to competitions, brideways and tourist attractions
- obtaining necessary consents so buyers see a "ready-to-go" package