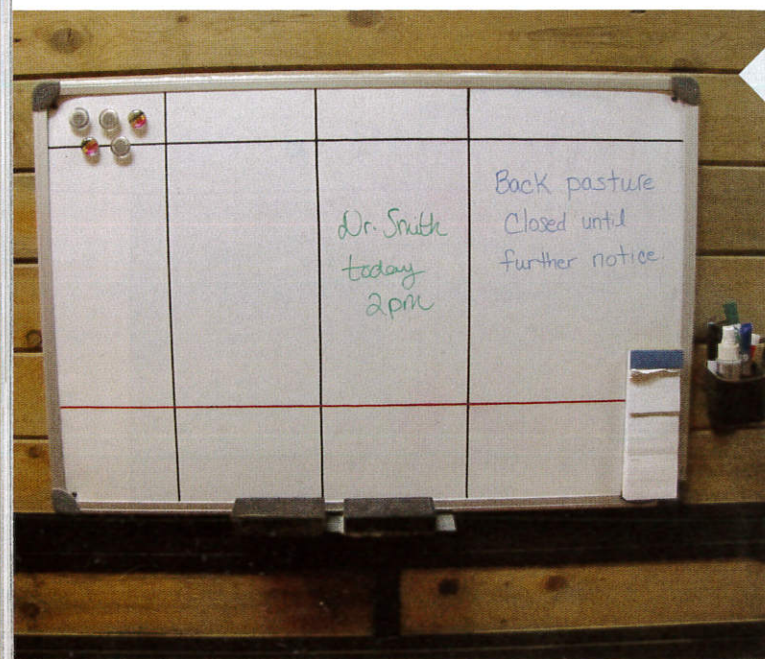


# Countdown to Spring: 10 TIPS to Bust Barn Clutter



Keep white-board messages current so everyone checks in often.

A tack cleaning hook in a convenient spot makes daily bridle care a breeze.



## TIP 1: TOSS IT!

Tough love is the name of the game when it comes to getting the barn in order: toss out accumulated junk like worn-out tack, expired medications, empty fly-spray bottles, old towels, and broken equipment. Don't be afraid to let go of items you won't use anymore. Yes, that includes your enormous stockpile of baling twine (there will always be more). Not sure you'll ever fit into extra-small chaps again? Pass them on to a teenager at the barn. She'll be glad and you'll have less stuff to manage.

BY NATALIE DEFEE MENDIK

A stall-door card with instructions and contact information, along with a photo of the horse, keeps confusion at bay.



## TIP 2: CLEAN IT!

Sweep out and wipe down everything. A broom or leaf blower removes dust and cobwebs, which are not only messy but a fire hazard as well. Empty out and wipe trunks and cabinets. Clean out corners of tack and feed rooms. Sweep up rodent-attracting grain spillage and crumbs. Keeping the stable swept out is a task that's much easier to keep up with once there's less clutter in the way.

## TIP 3: STORE IT!

Having a convenient place for everything goes a long way to keeping things in their place. There should be a designated area for all barn tools, with frequently-used tools easily accessible. Keep the rake, apple picker, and broom hung neatly on hooks — where everyone will take advantage of using them! If possible, keep bathing items such as



Stall doors are kept tidy with a blanket bar and halter hook.



Each horse/rider should have their own saddle rack and bridle hook in the tack room.

sweat-scrapers in an organizer in the wash rack. At cross-tie grooming stations keep a collapsible saddle-rack for people tacking up. Have a muck bucket and manure fork by grooming areas. In the tack room, each horse/rider should have designated bridle hooks and saddle racks, along with a tack locker or space for a tack trunk.

## TIP 4: LABEL IT!

Make the humble labeler your buddy during your organizational campaign. Everything from feed bins to





Create a system for managing each horse's supplements.

Neatly hung bridles help keep the tack-room clutter-free.

bridle hooks look tidier with uniform labels. Boarders, students, and staff will be able to clearly see what belongs to whom and goes where. No more "Where's Sport's bridle?" questions while you're in the middle of a lesson. A Sharpie® is your go-to tool for putting your initials on items that tend to go astray, such as hoof picks and brushes.

#### TIP 5: RECORD IT!

Don't forget the ever-present white board for messages and reminders. Large stables do well with a wall calendar marking upcoming events, lesson schedules, vet visits, farrier appointments, and so on. Access for all to important details such as turnout and feeding schedules goes a long way toward keeping everyone happy. Prominently display emergency contacts. Keep this space up-to-date, erasing old messages, so everyone's in the habit of looking in for new information.

#### TIP 6: HOT SPOT— FEED ROOM

Remember those labels and that white board? The feed room is a great place to employ these organizational tactics. Create a chart detailing what each horse gets at each feeding. Label feed bins, buckets, feed scoops, and supplements to avoid confusion. Create a system for storing supplements. Be sure grain bins are rodent-proof and the feed-room door remains securely closed.



Hooks in cross-tie areas make tacking up a snap.

#### TIP 7: HOT SPOT— MEDICINE CABINET

Decide whether tack room, office, or feedroom is the most logical place for your medicine cabinet. Store items in some sort of actual cabinet to avoid dust accumulation on your medical supplies. Make sure medications haven't expired and that you have all essential items on hand.

#### TIP 8: HOT SPOT— OFFICE

The paper-chase may not be the most glamorous aspect of barn life, but accessible information is a must. Whether

your barn has a full-fledged office with a computer or a little table in the corner of the tack room, certain documents and details must at your fingertips. Find a system that works for you, whether storing data on a laptop, in a binder, or in a filing cabinet. Use that system to keep horse health records and phone numbers of important individuals such as owners, veterinarians, insurance agencies, and farriers handy.

A manure tub, shovel and broom in grooming bays serve as a gentle reminder to clean up after each horse.



#### TIP 9: HOT SPOT— STALL DOORS

Store blankets in daily use neatly folded on blanket bars on each stall door. Store out-of-season blankets on shelves (preferably clean and in bags) in the tack room. Blanket hooks up high in an empty spot in the barn are a great way to hang wet blankets by the chest straps to dry. Each stall door should have a halter hook and information card.

#### TIP 10: HOT SPOT— ARENA

To keep clutter in the arena to a minimum, store jumps,



A whip organizer in the arena saves riders a trip back to the tack room.

poles, cavalletti, barrels, and cones when not in use. Keep a basket near the entrance for cell phones and other items you don't want in your pockets while riding. A whip organizer accessible from both ground and mounted heights can save a lot of hassle when you realize you need a whip. Station a muck bucket and manure fork in a convenient spot for riders to pick up manure on their way out.

#### THE FRUITS OF YOUR LABOR

Once the big job of creating an orderly stable is complete, a few minutes of straightening up each day will keep it that way. Make it a team effort with all the barn's 'regulars' pitching in to keep the stable nice for everyone. An organized stable looks nice, provides a healthy environment for the horses, and allows you to spend your time riding rather than hunting around for missing items. 🐾

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