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Examples of group housing for horses

Keeping horses has always been bound with agriculture. Many farm businesses keep horses as additional income source. The classic housing in single boxes sometimes complemented through a small outside run often does not offer the herd animal horse sufficient encouragement for social contact and movement. In contrast, keeping horses together in groups is seen as a very welfare-oriented form of husbandry that, in addition to requiring outstanding management and a high level of skill in horse husbandry, needs the right kind of housing and surroundings. This is what the federal competition “Agricultural Construction” was concerned with in 2007/2008. The building solutions of the seven prize-winning participants are presented in the following.

Keywords

federal competition, group housing of horses, agricultural construction

Abstract

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Fig. 2

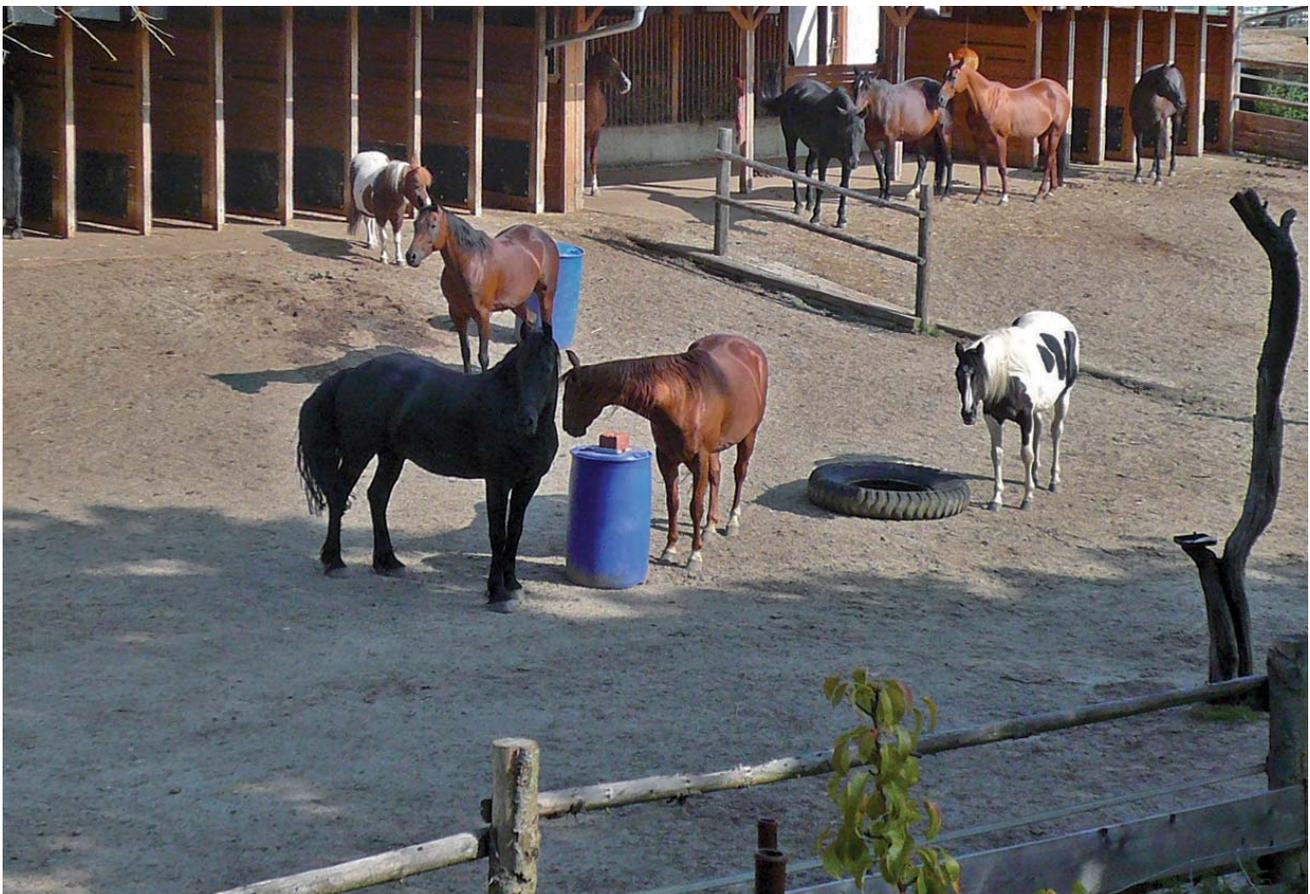


Fig. 2: Generously proportioned run-out sheds with structurelements make it easy to avoid

The Federal Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (BMELV) launched a federal competition “Agricultural Construction“ with the theme “Group housing of horses on farms“. As with the competitions in previous years the target was recognition of exemplary building solutions that could serve as especially successful planning examples for encouraging farmers wishing to build. Sought out were good examples of group housing aimed at meeting the requirements of the animals but also the people involved. The businesses had also to be cost-effective. On November 11, 2008 Secretary of State Dr Müller honoured the prizewinners at the TopTierTreff in EuroTier Hanover for their exemplary construction solutions that are described below. The KTBL publication 40080 “Gruppenhaltung von Pferden“, available from KTBL, contains detailed information on the farms involved.

Waldhof, Anette and Herbert Oppelt

The Oppelt family built their open-fronted stable for a group of 18 geldings onto a newly built hayshed. Extending the shed roof gave a south facing covered area of 7.50 x 30 m that was left completely open. This serves as lying area for the horses. Interior construction of the bedded lying area featured centrally situated integration boxes. On the east side a computer-controlled concentrate feed station is sited. The around 2000 square meter outrun is half sanded, half paved. On the solid floored area are sited two computer-controlled forage feeding automatics, each with two feeding points. Outrun entry for individual animals is controlled by selection gate. Cost for lying areas, outrun and feeding facilities was calculated at 8000 € per horse.

Hahnenhof, Markus Wipperfürth

Another approach to group husbandry is practiced on Hahnenhof where 52 sport and hobby horses are kept in 13 decentral group stables each for four horses. These modules each comprise four sections with support members of steel tubing. Walls are of galvanised steel frames with timber planking. Two sections can be divided into one or two lying areas. Each section has feeding points and there’s a harness/feed room serving all sections. The outruns can be reached through the sanded paddock. The decentral layout of the buildings presented a logistic challenge solved by applying mobile technology featuring a small manure container in each stable regularly collected and directly tipped into the manure spreader by wheeled loader. The innovative modular system of this small group stabling is recommended where there’s the available space or where gradual farm expansion allows such a development. Costs for a new construction with lying areas, outrun and feeding points were comparatively low at 7000 €.

Kapllerhof, Renate and Johann Hirschmann

Core of the Hirschmann family’s new-built stables on a green-

field site is a 20 m x 60 m south-facing open fronted shed. The building with its larch cladding and insulated roof with sandwich elements includes, alongside social rooms and feed store, six group stables each for eight horses. On the open south side the shed roof has been extended by 5 m and also lowered, offering good shadowing capability for the stable interior when the sun is high. The service area on the north side of the shed is separated from the group housing area by a

Fig. 1



Conflicts take a harmless course if enough room is available to avoid.

feeding fence bordering a 4 m wide driveable feeding passage. From this point, the group stables are divided into three areas: bedded feeding and lying area, solid-floored and roofed exercise area with insulated drinking troughs and sanded outrun. The non-separation of feeding and lying areas depends on horse breeds that tend not to be too aggressive between each other. Through integrating hay and bedding storage, stable area and social rooms, the total building cost could be kept very low with 4600 € invested per horse for lying area, outrun and feeding point.

Gut Mischenried, Dr Petra Wichmann

So that customers could have a choice, Dr Wichmann created a stable layout with 17 single boxes plus paddock and six small group stables each for four sport and hobby horses, the latter comprising lying area, solid floored paddock with insulated drinking troughs and four feeding points. The lying area is walled on three sides with two exits to the paddock. In direction stable passage, the lying area is bordered with a timber wall. The front of the feed stands above the clap troughs is covered with safety glass allowing the horses a free but protected view into the stable passage. Underneath the troughs there is a hatch for feeding forage. Space boarding helps to give the stable good ventilation with a transparent roof ridge ensuring plenty of light. The total concept of the complex is aimed at the sports-interested rider. Investment in group housing stabling (lying area, outrun, feeding points) lay by 8100 € per horse.

Foal production farm, Wolfgang und Reinhold Reisch

The Reisch brothers’ business concerns rearing foals from weaning to three-year-old. The new stable complex was conceived for four groups, each of 10 young horses. Two identical buildings separated by a solid-floored exercise yard nestle into the slightly undulant landscape. The upper building is steel framed with timber cladding and is used as forage store. Under the overhanging roof are feed stands of differing widths appropriate for rearing of young horses. The second building, parallel to the first, is walled up to a height of 2.60 m and divided into four lying areas of around 90 sq m apiece. The space in the stable complex when combined with the year-round paddock outrun is of a good welfare standard for horses. Investment costs for the lying, feeding

and exercise areas were calculated at 4000 € per horse.

Birkenhof, Bettina und Egbert Achilles

Through carefully altering the construction, the barn within the listed steading belonging to the Achilles family was converted into a stable area for two groups each of ten horses. Lying areas separated by a feeding passage cover 124 and 146 sq m and two integration areas. Each have three exits to the outrun where self-made feed stands and forage racks are situated. The outrun features three different types of flooring and is very well laid out through integration with a plantation of old trees. The consequent separation of function areas for feeding, drinking, exercise and resting works well and represents a cost-effective conversion at an investment of 4560 € per stable place (lying area, outrun, feeding place).

Unterschönbach Farm Kathrin und Bernhard Brunner

As an additional income source on their farm Mr and Mrs Brunner introduced group housing for currently 16 horses. The farm's converted machinery shed serves as lying area. The horses have around 170 sq m as lying and resting area. Various exits give access to feeding stands at a lower level. Through wide separation of the different function areas and utilisation of the ways through the existing vegetation, as well as the different floor materials in the around 1600 sq m outrun, a great deal of movement encouragement has been created for the horses. Feeding stands are of timber and made on the farm. Through utilisation of the existing buildings investment costs for the lying area, the outrun and the feeding stands could be kept low at 3100 € per horse.

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