

What Should I Have on My Equine Website?

And How Much Is It Going to Cost?

by Janice D. Byer

For every business, including those that are in the equine industry, a website is a must have when it comes to your marketing efforts. What to include on your equine website depends on what you are selling and to whom. Your product or service along with who your target market is will play a huge role in deciding what to include on your website. However, if you are new to having a website and don't have any idea what to include, the following are ideas for your equine website.

Standard pages:

There are generally 2-4 basic, standard pages that most websites include...

Home – This is the first page that everyone will see on your site, including the search engine spiders. You need to include keyword heavy introductory content as well as visually appealing images.

About Us – This page will be about the people behind the business. It needs to include a short bio of each person and their background in the industry.

Links – This page serves two purposes... it is where you will place links to other businesses that you recommend and it also is imperative to getting good placement in the search engines.

Contact – This page includes your full contact information and a map to your location if clients generally come to you.

Services – This page is where you will list and further explain the services that you offer, or

Products – This is the page where you will provide details of the products that you offer.

Other pages to be considered are:

News & Events – Used to share what is happening at your facility and elsewhere.

Staff – Showcase the staff (your team) that helps you every day.

Association Memberships – Display logos & links to industry specific organization (ie. OEF, Equine Canada, etc.), that you belong to.

Quotation – Gather information before actually speaking to someone who needs your products or services.

Testimonials – Testimonials show potential clients that working with you is a rewarding experience.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – List frequently asked questions and their responses.

Optional website features:

Photo Gallery – Recommended for most equine business websites as horse people are generally visual people and love to look at horse related images.

Videos – and other media. Include videos of either your own horses or a display of your skills or products.

Forums – Allow your site visitors to form a community and interact with each other.

Classified Ads – Visitors can post the various used items they want to sell.

Directory – Allow your site visitors to showcase their own businesses.

Equine specific pages:

Stud & Broodmare Farms & Horse Sales:

Our Mares, Our Foals & Our Stallions – Individual pages to showcase your sale or breeding program horses.

Our Breeding Program – Information about what is involved in your breeding program.

Lesson, Training & Racing Stables, and Boarding Facilities:

Our Horses – Pictures and descriptions of your horses.

Our Facility – Information and pictures about your entire property.

Coaches – Include background of your coaches and training staff.

Rates – Optional... set rates or rate ranges for your services.

Farriers, Equine Dentists & Veterinarians, Massage Therapists, Trainers, Coaches, etc:

Rates – Rates can be included either as a standalone page or on your services page.

Qualifications – This is extremely important information in the eyes of your potential clients.

Horse Transportation:

Our Truck(s) & Trailer(s) – Include age and details and pictures your the truck & trailer.

Service Area – Be sure to specify where you are willing to drive.

Rates or Quote – Include a range of rates or allow visitors to request a quotation.

Equine Photography & other Equine Designers

Photo Gallery/Portfolio – This page is a must for photographers and other designers.

Copyright Info – Include a complete outline of your copyright information.

Purchase Information – Outline exactly how people can purchase your photographs/designs.

Order Form – Either a fill-in email form or a PDF form that can be printed and faxed to you.

Recreational Riding, Vacations, Dude Ranches & Camps

Our Horses – Include pictures and descriptions of the horses.

Our Facility – Include information & pictures about your entire property.

Accommodations – Include information about your rooms, cabins or other lodgings.

Rates – Include alongside your services or allow the customer to request a quotation.

Other Service Businesses (*ie. Saddle Fitting, Blanket Repairs, Clipping, Equine Insurance, Competition Venues, Realtors, Organizations, Associations & Equine Publications*)

As previously mentioned, most Service oriented businesses will require a Services page (or pages) and can also include photo galleries, rates, location, etc. It all depends on your business and your target market.

Other Sales Businesses (*ie. Tack Shops, Feed Stores, Equine Gifts, Trailer Sales, Jumps, Farm Equipment, Farm Structures, Fencing & Hay Sales*)

If you offer products for sale, you will need to include photos, descriptions, pricing, available sizes and colours, shipping costs, etc. (See Ecommerce Capabilities for more information) and of course the standard pages (Home, About, Links, Contact, etc.)

Ecommerce Capabilities:

Shopping Cart - If you plan to sell any quantity of products, you will need a shopping cart (unless, of course you prefer to just showcase your products and have visitors contact or visit you to purchase). What you will need will depend upon your requirements and budget.

Shopping cart options include **open-source carts** which are generally free and installed on your own hosting plan or server; **third-party paid solutions** where the actual credit card transaction takes place on their server and connects to your shopping cart (PayPal is an example of a third-party payment solution that easily integrates with any shopping cart); and **complete solutions** where a company will design your shopping cart from the ground up for an initial design fee and an ongoing monthly fee.

The shopping cart is the beginning aspect of everything that is needed to allow you to seamlessly sell products from your website. You may also need, depending on which type of cart you choose, a **Payment Gateway** and a **Merchant Account** (neither required for Paypal).

Shipping Information – Outline your shipping processes and fees as well as your refund policy.

Additional Information:

Calendar of Events – Display any type of regular activities or upcoming events.

Navigation – A complete and easy to follow navigation system is essential to every website.

Photos – Pictures add a visual appeal to your site that your visitors will appreciate.

What else will I need?

Domain – A domain is the actual website address of your site (eg. www.yoursite.com).

Web Hosting – This is the place where your website will sit on the Internet.

So... be honest... how much will this all cost me?

Design Costs:

The cost to design a website depends on many factors:

1. what pages you want to include
2. the features that you want to include
3. the amount of content, text, videos
4. whether you want ecommerce included
5. and the web design company that you work with

Every web design company has different pricing structures but you are looking at spending anywhere from \$500 to thousands of dollars to get a professionally designed website for your small equine business.

Every basic site needs to include Home, About, Links & Contact. A site with just these basic pages, consisting of strictly text and a few images will cost approximately \$500 to \$700.

Most sites not only include these basic pages but will also include at least 3 or 4 other pages to showcase their products or services and their businesses (eg. Services, Our Horses, Photo Gallery, Our Facility, etc.). Again, for websites that are static (meaning no added intricate features) and include the basic pages and up to 3 or 4 extra pages, the cost will range from \$800 to \$1200.

For approximately 10 pages or so, you are looking at a cost of \$1500+.

The above pricing is ballpark and a final price should be spelt out in a contract between you and your designer before you move ahead.

Other required costs include:

Domain Registration – Domains with a common extension (eg. .com, .ca, etc.) will run you about \$18.95 per year.

Web Hosting – The cost for space on a server all depends how much you want to include on your site. It can range from \$10 per month to \$50 or more per month.

Ecommerce Costs:

The **shopping cart** can be anywhere from a free solution to one that there are charges for everything from the set up to the transaction fees.

A typical **merchant account** will cost about \$100 - \$250 to set up, an average monthly minimum fee of \$25 and approximately \$5 per month for statements. They usually charge from 1% to 4% per transaction. Most merchant accounts also have some sort of transaction flat-fee, ranging from \$0.05 to \$0.25.

PayPal charges no set up fee, a 2.9% discount rate and a \$.30 per transaction. If your sales are less than \$50,000 per month then you will save money with a 3rd party processor like PayPal.

The time needed for the additional work required to design your ecommerce pages can vary but you are looking at an estimated \$500+ depending on the extent of work needed.

Conclusion

The pages you include on your site and how you display them can have a big impact on the confidence of your site visitors and potential clients in your products or services. The layout, colouring, pages and features are just as important as the actual content and images that you include. You need to design your site with your target market and the search engines in mind.

Download a free 18-page ebook explaining further what to include on your equine site and how much it will cost at <http://www.equinewebdesign.ca>.

Janice Byer is horse lover, rider and owner of ***Equine Web Design*** and has been designing websites for small businesses, including equine businesses, for over 10 years. Be sure to check out her blog, *Diary of a Horse Mom* on her farm website at <http://www.shadyridgefarm.ca/blog> and her *Web Design Portfolio* at <http://www.equinewebdesign.ca>.