

Horizon Structures

Atglen, Pennsylvania

Deciding to invest in a barn of your own is a big step for most horse owners, and it is crucial to know that you're in good hands along the way. Finding the right contractor for your barn can take time, but in the long run it is in your horse's best interests. Every aspect of ensuring a quality barn, from its base to its roof, depends upon the ability, knowledge and expertise of the barn builder.

If you ask Dave Zook for advice about buying a barn, he'll tell you the best thing is to do your research and find the best contractor possible. For 20 years, Dave has been involved in the horse

barn/storage shed industry in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He began his business by building sheds and outbuildings that customers could buy ready-made for delivery. Having grown up in Lancaster County in the heart of Amish country, it was not hard for Dave to form relationships with Amish carpenters known for their quality craftsmanship.

Anyone who has spent much time in an area with an Amish population recognizes the sturdy, long-lasting craftsmanship characteristic of their handcrafted furniture and constructed buildings. People in the northeast, especially in New England, appreciate the detail and simple strength of Amish carpentry. Dave's carpenters offer similar skill and workmanship for great prices, and his customers keep com-

ing back: "They know they can't get that kind of quality for that price anywhere else," he says.

Wherever there's an Amish population, there are bound to be horses and horse owners nearby. Once Dave had established himself building and selling storage sheds, he saw an increase in demand for a different kind of structure: horse barns. In the late 1990s, he expanded his company's line of buildings to include barns as well as run-in sheds for the growing community of equestrian enthusiasts in his area.

Dave knows the only way to run a business is to give your customers a reason to come back. Part of that is the reassurance that the company from which they bought their barn will still be around in the coming years. Horse barns, like any other outdoor structure, become weathered and worn over time, and even those of highest quality eventually require some maintenance. Dave's customers know that if and when their barns or sheds need repairs, Horizon Structures will be there.

Every structure that Dave and his carpenters build is made of

high-quality materials meant to last a lifetime. But just in case, Dave offers a "written guarantee" on every part of each building he sells. Dave will replace any defects discovered in the first year free of charge; his architectural shingles are guaranteed for up to 30 years; regular asphalt shingles have a 25-year warranty and all hardware is under a lifetime warranty.

For his customers, knowing they can consult Dave years after the construction of a barn eases a lot of their concern. Even once a warranty is up, they can still get upgrades done that match their original structure perfectly and end up looking brand new.

Dave feels that offering pre-made barns that are ready for delivery is a great asset to his clientele; it allows them to quickly replace their horses' living space in the unfortunate circumstance of a fire or destructive storm. Dave's barns can also be easily relocated in the event of a change of property.

Even if customers haven't been back to his storefront for awhile, Dave keeps them updated regarding barn maintenance, new available options and how to get in touch whenever they might need to via a semi-annual mailing list.

Dave and his company keep up with the times. His website, www.shedsandgazebos.com, is a wealth of information, with insider hints and answers to frequently asked questions about building the best barn for your horses. For example, Dave recommends wood barns over metal ones, for a variety of reasons including safety, comfort and appearance. He offers advice on ventilation, barn placement and the different hardware options. He even considers the well-being of vets and farriers likely to frequent his customers' barns, recommending the inclusion of shady and covered areas for their workspace and comfort.

From the attention to detail evident on Horizon's website, you get the impression that Dave carefully considers the horses since they are the future residents of the barns he builds. Dave notes, "We want your horse barn to be a reflection of your passion for your horses and the pride you take in providing them the best care possible. Through our quality, value and personalized service, we will show you the way to a comfortable, sturdy and safe barn for your horse to call home."

Dave keeps Horizon Structures a successful business by devoting himself to providing the newest innovations and best techniques available to his loyal customers. He strives to stay one step ahead of the issues of quality in the industry that inevitably pop up every year.

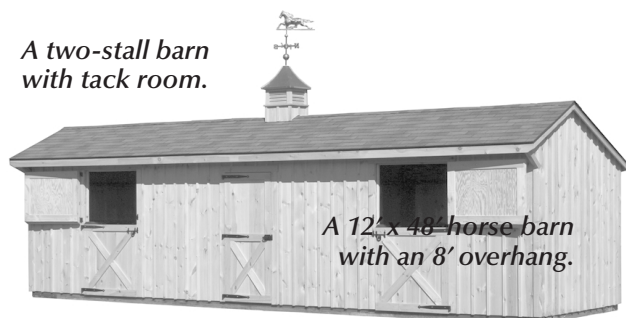
In August of 2005, Dave added Jill Siragusa to the staff as the Sales and Marketing Administrator. Jill, a current horseowner and lifelong horse enthusiast, is familiar with customers' issues and concerns, and can supply quotes and consultations when needed.

Providing the latest options for lasting barns, such as steel grill covered windows to prevent damage from chewing, is just another way that Dave makes sure his customers keep coming back. Repeat business is also great for Dave's most successful mode of advertising: word of mouth. Most of his customers come to him on recommendations from friends or family.

To the aspiring barn builder, Dave advises committing for the long haul: "It's easy to find horse barn dealers. It's harder to find a reputable company that won't fall by the wayside after a few years in the business." Similarly, to the potential barn buyer, he emphasizes that the best choices are the educated ones that reflect the homework of figuring out what you want and need from a contractor; it's important to know that the company you pick is right for you. Offering superior customer service is worth it, says Dave. "We want to stay friends and neighbors."

For more information, contact Dave at Horizon Structures at 610-593-7710 or horizon@epix.net, or visit their website at www.shedsandgazebos.com. ■

A two-stall barn with tack room.



A 12' x 48' horse barn with an 8' overhang.



A 12' x 24' run-in shed with cupola.

