

# GET ORGANIZED!

**A well-organized tack room is attractive to your clients and allows you to find what you need when you need it.**

**BY JENNIFER WILLIAMS, PH.D.**

Whether your tack room is as ornate as those at the once-famous Longview Farm, which included Tiffany lamps, or a simple storage shed, a messy tack room is an eyesore. Cleaning and reorganizing or redesigning your tack room turns your once-disastrous room into a center point for your farm.

## **A GOOD CLEANING**

Your first step in reorganizing a messy tack room is to remove all the equipment and thoroughly clean the room. Make any needed repairs, and paint the room with washable paint so that you can periodically clear dirt and grime off the walls to keep the tack room looking neat throughout the year. Then look through your equipment and set aside broken items that can be repaired. Throw items that can't be fixed in the trash. Decide if blankets, sheets and saddle pads with holes or tears can be fixed, and toss those that can't. Donate items that you never use to a non-profit rescue or therapeutic riding program.

## **PLANNING**

Once the tack room is cleaned and you've culled through unused or damaged equipment, think about your tack room needs. John Blackburn of Blackburn Architects in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco, Calif., advises clients to consider the use of their tack room: is it just a place to store tack, or is it a "social center" for clients? Tack rooms used solely for storage can be smaller while those used as gathering places need more room for chairs or sofas. Also, do you need to clean and rearrange, or will

you be adding on? You can tidy up and remove unused equipment on your own in an afternoon, and hanging saddle racks or shelves to increase your storage space may take a few hours. But if you need to completely overhaul your tack room or add on, consider hiring a professional.

## **DO-IT-YOURSELF PROJECTS**

If you don't need a complete tack room redesign and have a few basic tools, these simple and easy DIY projects can help you keep your tack room organized.

- *Saddle racks.* You can build your own by cutting a 4 x 4 post to the length you need and screwing a hook into one end. Hang eye hooks on an upright post attached to the wall to create removable saddle racks. You can also install pre-made saddle racks purchased from on-line tack stores or at your local tack dealer. Whether building your own or purchasing a pre-made rack, be sure to screw or nail them into a stud; otherwise, the weight of the saddle may pull them out of the wall. If you don't want to mount racks on your walls, Equi-Racks from CMW Inc. (which is available through T Bar K Outfitters, [www.tbark.com](http://www.tbark.com)) sells free-standing saddle racks that hold from three to nine saddles.

- *Bridles and halters.* Individual bridle/halter hooks available from most tack stores can be installed on stalls or in a line along a tack room wall. Sportote offers other options: a three-tiered bridle rack that can hold up to 26 bridles, as well as single-tiered versions that hold five to ten bridles (available through Horse-

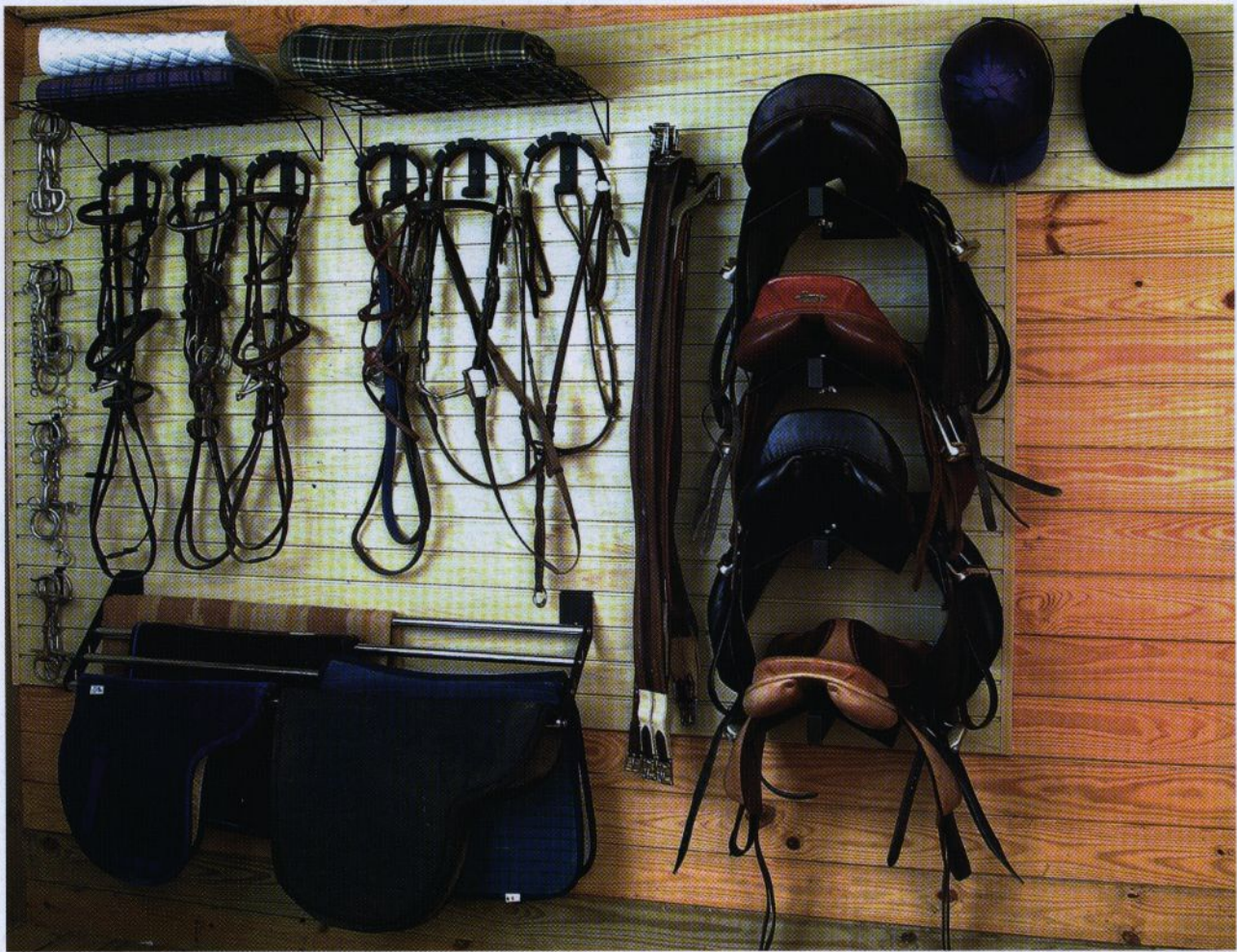
man's Pride, Inc.—[www.horsemenspride.com](http://www.horsemenspride.com)).

When storing halters in the tack room, keep them close to the door with lead ropes attached so they're ready to grab in an emergency. If you have several different sizes, Deanne Muller of Farmington, Minn., suggests using electrical tape to color code them by size. Deanne says that this works great with lesson horses—especially if you also color code each stall door so students can grab the right "color" halter for their horse.

- *Blankets and saddle pads.* Saddle pads, sheets and blankets may pose the biggest storage challenge. Some barns install blanket racks outside each stall and keep saddle pads with saddles. When storing blankets in the tack room, Equi-Racks offers wall-mounted blanket racks that hold six to ten blankets. They also offer a free-standing blanket rack that holds six blankets. National Bridle Shop ([www.nationalbridleshop.com](http://www.nationalbridleshop.com)) sells a wall-mounted blanket rack that holds 12 blankets. Another option is to store blankets in large Rubbermaid storage containers with labels listing which blankets are inside so you don't have to rummage through multiple tubs in search of the blanket you need.

- *Miscellaneous equipment.* National Bridle Shop and Sportote both sell systems that hold wire baskets and shelves useful for storing medications, grooming supplies and other small equipment. These metal racks can be screwed into a wall, or hung with hooks so they're easily movable.

- *Helmets.* Helmets may be the second largest storage headache. You



This wall system by Fox Chase Tack-Room Systems makes organizing easy and flexible. The slatted panels allow for an adjustably configured system of saddle racks, bridle hooks and much more.

can store helmets in storage tubs, grouping helmets by size and labeling each tub so your students can easily find the helmet they need. Another option is to hang helmets in a neat row on hooks attached to pegboard.

RB Components ([www.rbcomponents.com](http://www.rbcomponents.com)) sells helmet bays for one to four helmets which can be mounted on your tack room walls. These were originally intended for personal watercraft or motorcycle helmets, but they can store riding helmets, too.

Another simple solution is to tie wire or string from one wall to the other and hang the helmets. They are easy to snap on and off the wire, and this system allows them to air out. The trick is to keep it within arm's length of your students.

### TACK ROOM SYSTEMS

A complete tack room organizing sys-

tem may be the answer for tack rooms needing a major overhaul. Although manufacturers offer installation, they also say the systems are easy to install yourself.

- Fox Chase Tack-Room Systems ([www.tackroomstore.com](http://www.tackroomstore.com)) sells a tack room organization system that includes slatted panels with blanket bars, saddle racks, bridle hooks, shelves and baskets that fit into the slats. All accessories can be removed and rearranged as your needs change. The panels come in four- or eight-foot sections in white, pine, cedar or gray, and can be installed on top of existing walls or directly onto studs.

- TackRack by Dry Creek ([www.drycreektack.com](http://www.drycreektack.com)) offers a system made of high-strength 1 ¼" steel tubing and ¼" rolled wire and protected by a powder coat finish. (For more information, check out the

following article.)

- WallToWall Storage Solutions ([www.walltowallstorage.com/Horse\\_Tack\\_Storage.html](http://www.walltowallstorage.com/Horse_Tack_Storage.html)) sells TackRacks Plus: saddle racks, bridle hooks, and blanket racks that fit into grooves in storewall and slatwall (which you can purchase from home improvement stores).

### A PROFESSIONAL REDESIGN

Although DIY projects cut costs, unless you have experience building you'll need to hire a professional for a complete redesign or an expansion. John Blackburn says that when working with a client to redesign a tack room, "we analyze the entire use of the barn and the tack room and look for creative ways for them to work better for the owner and user." They help their clients with issues such as trunk storage, laundry needs, blanket



Top left: Anyone handy with a hammer can construct a good locker for clients to store their tack in. Bottom left: The Stable Mate system by Dry Creek Tack has pieces that slide out for easy access and the doors are louvered for good ventilation. Top: This free-standing saddle rack by CMW, called Equi-Racks, makes storing saddles easy and space efficient.

storage and future growth, as well as immediate needs for tack storage and accessibility. He says each tack room they create is individual and tailored to meet the needs of the client.

### TACK LOCKERS/CABINETS

If you run a boarding barn, your boarders want storage space for their equipment. You can give each boarder a space of her own in a communal tack room with Horseman's Pride Sportote Products ([www.horsemen-pride.com](http://www.horsemen-pride.com)) tack room organizers. This wire rack hangs on the wall and includes a saddle rack, shelf and two baskets that your boarders can use to store their equipment.

Lockable tack lockers or cabinets are another option, and they help pre-

vent equipment theft and unauthorized "borrowing." If you have time and experience building things, you can design and build lockers to fit your available space or you can purchase a tack locker plan from the Progressive Farmer ([www.progressivefarmer.com/farmer/store/projects/tacklocker.html](http://www.progressivefarmer.com/farmer/store/projects/tacklocker.html)).

Another option is to head to your local hardware store. Bigger ones like Home Depot, Ikea and Lowe's offer systems that work well in a tack room setting and are relatively easy to assemble yourself. Options can include louvered doors for better ventilation.

Keith and Dona Taylor in Eureka, Mont., ordered a locker kit to build lockers for boarders at their Lake Kococanusa Arena. Keith says the lockers were easy to assemble: "They are shipped ready to put together and

include a template for cutting the plywood inserts that make up the locker." Their lockers include two saddle racks as well as a bridle rack and include plenty of room for grooming supplies.

You can also hire a professional builder to custom design and build lockers to fit the space you have available. Whether large or small, a professional can help you maximize the space you have. John Blackburn says some tack lockers they've designed are more like walk-in closets or individual "mini tack rooms."

When looking at a messy tack room, the task before you may seem daunting. But with a little time, planning and possibly some professional help, you can create a clean and organized tack room that is attractive to clients and allows you to easily find equipment. [sm]