



# *Own Responsibly*



**Guidance for current and potential horse owners  
from the Unwanted Horse Coalition**

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## INTRODUCTION

Of all the words used when describing horse ownership, perhaps the two most important are “rewards” and “responsibility.”

The meaning of the first is immediately apparent: Every horse owner quickly understands how rewarding it is to be part of a horse’s life, whether that life is showing, driving, racing, or of providing simple pleasure.

Raising our horses, training our horses, and being there when they excel at their particular discipline is both pleasurable and intense, and you soon come to understand what Winston Churchill meant when he said,

*“There is something about the outside of a horse  
that is good for the inside of a man.”*

Our horses become a catalyst for personal accomplishment, the center of family activity, and a means to further social interaction among those who own horses.

But the rewards come with a responsibility — for nothing short of caring for the life of an individual who will come to rely upon us for food, shelter, healthcare, education, and emotional interaction. Horse owners also quickly begin to understand the complexities of such a “life bargain,” and accept it without reservation.

There are times, however, when the bond between horse and owner must be broken: There are changes in our personal lives, changes in the health of the horse, and other such circumstances that dictate that we have to sever that bond.

In this booklet we discuss just such situations, and how you as a horse owner can — responsibly — bring your ownership of a horse to a positive end. It’s something that new or long-time horse owners don’t like to think about, but preparing for the day when a horse may become “unwanted” has to be considered as a fundamental aspect of horse ownership from the very first day we decide to own a horse.

We all must learn to “OWN RESPONSIBLY.” That means that before you buy or breed a horse, you think about how your actions affect the horse. Your responsibility to your horse begins before your stewardship and extends past your care.

Fortunately, we have options. Many options.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF HORSE OWNERSHIP

Owning a horse is a privilege that carries with it many responsibilities on the part of the owner. Today’s domesticated horse depends upon its owner to provide all of its basic needs for survival and good health. No matter what sort of environment a horse will occupy, a horse will require varying degrees of attention from the owner or someone else knowledgeable about proper horse care. The enjoyment of horse ownership depends heavily on the horse’s health and well-being. In return for the privilege of horse ownership and the enjoyment that brings, the prospective horse owner must not only make a substantial commitment of time to care for their horse, but they must also be prepared to make a substantial financial commitment to provide for the needs of the horse.



### Nutrition

Proper nutrition is an everyday consideration of horse management and is essential to every horse engaged in any activity. The proper feeding of horses involves knowing the nutritional needs of the horse and providing for this need through the provision of suitable feedstuff. It is always a good idea to check with your veterinarian or an equine nutritionist if you have questions regarding the nutritional needs of your horse. Proper feeding of horses means attention to details. The horse’s nutritional requirements are influenced by the following factors: size of the animal, the environment in which the horse is kept, the age of the horse, the type of use or activity, and individual metabolic needs and characteristics. It is important that horses be provided with feed regularly and that they have adequate access to clean, fresh water at all times.

Water is an essential nutrient that is necessary for horses to maintain normal bodily function. Horses are best given water free-choice or they should be able to drink their fill at least twice a day. Most horses will drink 5 to 10 gallons of water per day with factors such as hot weather, exercise, and lactation causing a significant increase in water consumption. When horses are given inadequate access to water, they become dehydrated and become more susceptible to a variety of health problems, such as weight loss, colic, and kidney disease.

Since the horse is a grazing animal, the basis for all horse diets should be hay or pasture. Good-quality forage alone can meet the maintenance requirements for most horses. In many cases, horses will not only maintain weight, but can make slow body weight gains when fed an all-forage diet. Horses should be fed free-choice hay or pasture; if this is not possible they should receive at least 1 to 1.5 percent of their body weight in forage per day, which is 10 to 15 pounds of hay or pasture grass per day for a 1,000-pound horse.



Physical activity will, of course, increase the nutrient requirements of the horse and may necessitate the addition of concentrate to a basic forage/roughage feeding program. A variety of grains are utilized for the concentrate portion of the diet. The most common grains are oats, corn, and barley. The mixed grain diets are readily available from feed and farm supply stores and should be fed according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

As a general rule, the amount of concentrate should not exceed 30 percent of the total amount of feed being fed and it should be divided into at least two feedings per day. The grain is used to

supplement forage to provide the energy and other nutrients needed for faster weight gains, growth, increased milk production, and high levels of athletic activity.

## Shelter

Horses can adapt to a wide variety of environmental extremes if they are acclimated and have adequate feed and water. Horses with free access to shelter will often choose not to use it when it seems logical they would do so. Acceptable shelter may be natural, such as trees or rock formations, or constructed, such as sheds or barns. Horses do benefit from shelter, especially if it serves as a sunshade and windbreak.

The shelter should be of adequate size for the number of horses using it to avoid fighting and injury among the animals. Individual stalls in a barn should be large enough for the horse to turn around in and lay down in. A 12-foot by 12-foot stall is large enough for all but the largest horse. The shelter should be tall enough for the horse to be able to stand with its head held in a normal position without its ears touching the ceiling. The shelter should be adequately ventilated to help prevent respiratory tract irritation and should be free of hazards that might cause injury. Finally, it should have good footing/traction and be well-drained.

Horses should be given the opportunity for daily exercise. If the horse is kept in a stall or small paddock, it should be exercised daily, weather permitting, either by being ridden or by being turned out in a large paddock, arena, or pasture. If horses normally live in large paddocks or pasture, they will generally receive adequate exercise on their own.

## Health Care

Horse owners should engage the services of both a licensed veterinarian with experience in caring for horses and a farrier. Horses, like all animals, need regular, preventive health care as well as veterinary care for health problems as they arise. Horses should be observed by the owner or those caring for the horse at least once a day or more often during high-risk periods such as seasonal changes, introduction of new animals, or near foaling time. All horses should have a preventive health care program designed to meet the specific needs of the horse and appropriate to the facilities and environment.

Increased horse population density requires greater attention to disease prevention. The types of vaccinations, deworming program, and type of dental care should be determined by the veterinarian in charge of the horse's health care. Vaccinations are administered at least annually and often more frequently depending on the risk of exposure to infectious diseases. Horses are exposed to parasites in their environment on a regular basis, so deworming protocols will involve year-round administration of anthelmintics as determined by the veterinarian, as well as manure and pasture management to help reduce the level of exposure. Horse's teeth and oral cavity should be examined at least annually. Dental abnormalities should not be neglected as they will interfere with normal eating habits and adversely affect the overall health of the horse. Dental care should be performed by a licensed veterinarian or under veterinary supervision.

All horses require routine hoof care. This may range from simply trimming the hooves to complex corrective shoeing procedures. All horses require some type of hoof care at least every two to three months throughout the year, and more frequently if they are shod, in order to maintain the health of the foot. The frequency of required hoof care will depend on such factors as age, season, nutrition, environment, management, and injury. A farrier will normally be employed to do this work and is the one to advise what the needs may be.

## Life Span

All of us know of the 40-year-old pony, and with genetic luck and very good care, a horse may also live into his 40s. Whether or not a horse will live this long depends on genetics, a good home and veterinary care, and a bit of good luck. We generally find that horses begin to show signs of aging in their mid-teens. If they were living in the wild, disease, poor dentition, predators, and other mishaps would probably lead to a natural life span of 12 to 18 years. If we assume that a horse does not suffer a catastrophic event, such as colic or fractured bones, it is reasonable to expect that a horse will live into his 20s, and many will reach their 30s. Most horsemen consider a horse as old or aged when they reach 20 years of age. According to some references, the oldest horse lived to be nearly 50 years of age. Good dental and other veterinary care, good nutrition, and regular exercise will help a horse to live as long and as healthy a life as possible.

## Breeding

Many horse owners would like to experience the birth and raising of a foal. However, there are many things to consider before breeding a mare, and horse owners should invest a significant amount of time weighing the pros and cons of such a decision. There are both good and bad reasons to breed, and owners must honestly analyze how realistic bringing a new foal into the world is for their individual situation.

Factors to consider: The costs associated with breeding are numerous. The stud fee, which can range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars, is only part of the overall picture. Many of the costs associated with breeding are incurred beforehand.



Owners should pay particular attention to obtaining proper medical care for their mare. A veterinarian should conduct a thorough exam of the mare to ensure that she is physically healthy enough to possibly withstand the stress of pregnancy and motherhood. Even during an uneventful and otherwise “normal” pregnancy, the mare requires regular check ups in addition to her regular vaccination and deworming schedule.

Her feed and water intake levels will also increase over the course of the pregnancy, so owners should be prepared to absorb the increased cost of feeding and/or increased cost of boarding.

In addition to the veterinary costs for the mare, many newborn foals will require specialized medical care during the first few weeks of life that may also be costly.

Owners should truthfully examine exactly why they want to breed a mare. There are positive and negative reasons to consider when deciding to breed a mare, and each situation must be examined carefully. Some people wish to breed a mare because she has strong bloodlines and is an excellent athlete, in hopes of passing rich athletic talent to another generation. Some want to sell the foal to make money, which doesn’t always happen. It can be very difficult to make a profit on the sale of a foal, as the initial investment in breeding and raising it often outweighs what the animal will be worth to others. And owners should consider what they will do with an offspring if they are unable to sell it.

## **Disposition of Horses**

For a variety of reasons, there comes a time in many horse owners’ lives when they are no longer able, either physically or financially, to provide care for their horse and must make the decision to dispose of the horse. There are basically three ways to accomplish this: by sale, by donation/gift, and by euthanasia. Most horse owners feel some moral obligation to make sure the horse they are selling or donating ends up receiving proper care and treatment. If the horse is healthy and of a reasonable age, it is always best to find suitable new ownership rather than have to euthanize the horse. On the other hand, if the horse is old and not in good health, then the most humane decision may indeed be euthanasia.

Horses can be sold in a number of ways. Consignment to auction gives the seller the least amount of control over where the horse will end up. If knowing where the horse will go and to whom is important, then selling the horse by private treaty will enable the seller to learn more about the buyer and the facilities where the horse will be kept. The seller can even request that if the buyer ever decides to dispose of the horse, that they contact the seller before doing so and give the seller the first right of refusal to purchase the horse back. The seller may also exercise the right to cancel the registration papers and sell the horse without papers if the buyer agrees. This could prevent future use of the horse for showing or racing and for breeding and registering the offspring. For peace of mind, the seller should visit the new facility where the horse will be kept.

In the case of donations/gifts, the donor of the horse should inquire as to what will happen to the horse after donation, what will the horse be used for, will it be adopted by or sold to someone else, or will it be kept in “retirement.” It is appropriate to ask how the care of the horse will be paid for and to visit the new facility to see if other horses at that facility are being cared for properly. If horses are donated to veterinary schools for teaching and/or research, there are strict guidelines that the institution must follow to ensure humane care of horses in their care.

If the owner is completely unable to find suitable accommodations for their horse under any circumstance and they are still unable to continue to provide care for their horse, then the final option is to have the horse euthanized. Although this may appear to be harsh at the time, it is much better than relegating the horse to years of future neglect and potential abuse.

## OPTIONS FOR OWNERS WITH AN UNWANTED HORSE



Not all unwanted horses have suffered from neglect and abuse. A child may have outgrown his or her pony or moved on to different interests and the parent now has to contend with the monthly care and expenses of a large animal in the backyard or at a boarding facility.

Another scenario is the horse that has been a great working animal throughout the years but is getting older and can no longer perform up to the standards that the rider needs.

In this chapter we'll cover some of the options available based on the health, soundness, age and temperament of your horse. Many of the options we'll discuss have very strict criteria for qualification; not every horse is suitable for every job.

### Private Sale

Selling your horse to another person enables you to meet and perhaps develop a relationship with the buyer. There are many ways to advertise your horse for sale, including classified ads in your local paper, horse magazines, websites, feed and tack stores, shows or rides in your area, or by directly contacting other horse owners and letting them know you're marketing your horse for sale. Prices and conditions vary by sale and by region, so be aware of standards in your area. Also, in a private sale, you might have the option of putting a buy-back agreement into the sale. So if the new owner decides to sell the horse, you'll have an opportunity to buy the horse. Please remember to disclose any health problems, limitations or vices that your horse might have when selling him.

### Auctions

Often a quick way to sell a horse is by taking it to auction. Local sale barns or fairgrounds can provide you with auction dates. Additionally, some auctions are advertised in newspaper classifieds or at feed and tack stores, and on various websites.

Be aware of the types of animals that are being sold at various auctions. Almost all horse auctions involve the sale of horses to individuals who want to buy a horse for various purposes, such as racing, showing, stable horses or recreational riding. Many of these horses have "reserves" or minimum bids that must be paid for the sale to be completed. Indeed, at many the seller can speak to the auction company and set a price below which the horse would not be sold; it would be returned to the seller.

Other sales do not have such minimums and the horse is sold regardless of the bid price. In some of these sales, dealers are purchasing horses to take to facilities that will process the horses for meat to be shipped overseas for human consumption. Selling a horse for such purposes is a decision for the owner to make. But all owners should be aware of this possibility when they send their horses to auction.

## Leasing

An increasingly popular form of horse "ownership" is leasing. Provided the horse is sound with a good disposition, many people are interested in owning horses that would prefer this try-before-you-buy option. It provides an opportunity for potential owners to see how a horse would fit into their lives. As leasing grows in popularity, so do the forms of lease payments. You can loan the horse in exchange for boarding and daily care, or you can create another lease deal with the lessee.

## Facilities that Accept Horses

Numerous facilities play a role in providing care for or finding new owners or careers for horses that are considered unwanted or have been subjected to neglect or abuse.

Although the UHC does not endorse one particular facility, it supports the *Care Guidelines for Equine Rescue and Retirement Facilities*, developed by the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP).

If you've decided to find a retirement home for your horse, we strongly encourage you to read these guidelines and ensure the facility you're considering operates by them. While the vast majority of retirement facilities are run honestly and with the horses' best interests at heart, there have been reports of horses abused and neglected at a handful of facilities.

The AAEP guidelines were intended for rescue and retirement facilities, but any facility that accepts horses should adhere to the basics. When you visit a facility, be sure to look around. How do the other horses look? Is the place neat, clean and free of debris?

A list of equine facilities that accept horses can be found on the UHC website at [www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org](http://www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org) or by searching the World Wide Web.

## Retirement Facilities

What is a retirement facility?

A retirement facility can be compared to an assisted living facility for people. The staff is trained in caring for the health issues facing older horses and those with injuries.

What types of horses live there?

Horses that are no longer used for riding and working. Not only elderly horses but horses that have ailments but are still comfortable to walk and graze. Their daily routines should include lots of turnout with buddies and good, quality attention.

What should I look for when researching facilities?

A key issue with elderly horses is that they need room to move around to combat arthritis — horses standing in box stalls will stiffen up quickly. Another issue is specialized care, such as custom feed, special medical attention, and an educated staff that understands the needs of your horse.

Is it free?

Retirement facilities are not free for the most part. The owner pays a monthly board bill just as you would at any boarding facility.

Are there other types of retirement facilities?

Yes, but at those facilities you donate your horse and no longer own him or control what happens to him. Most of these are for specific breeds. In some cases, horses must be at least pasture sound — some may go on to second careers, while most spend the rest of their days eating grass. Unsound or “pasture pet” horses are only accepted for retirement at some facilities with a yearly tax-deductible donation for the on-going care of the horse.

## Therapeutic Riding Centers

Therapeutic riding centers are found in cities and towns across the nation. These centers provide a variety of equine activities to people with physical, emotional and learning disabilities. For individuals with special needs, equine-assisted activities have been shown to improve muscle tone, balance, posture, coordination, motor development, as well as emotional well-being.

The North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA), a national non-profit organization, accredits many of these riding centers and certifies their instructors.

*“Horses lend us the wings we lack.”*

— Pam Brown

Horses are valued partners in the human–equine relationship that is therapeutic riding. Because the horses must interact with individuals who often have profound disabilities, these riding centers are highly selective when accepting horses into a program. Many of these horses are donated, volunteered or leased by horse owners in the community.

The breed of a horse is not a critical consideration — different breeds offer different builds needed for a wide range of activities, including riding, driving, vaulting, and interaction on the ground — the most important aspect is the individual horse’s suitability for equine-assisted activities and therapy.

While minor health issues may be acceptable, horses used for therapeutic riding programs must be sound enough to work regularly. To the casual observer, walking in an arena with a disabled person looks like an easy task for a horse, but it is not. The horse must be physically able to carry a person whose weight may be unevenly distributed. In addition, the horse must also be able to deal with situations such as

quietly walking up to a ramp with a person in a wheelchair and standing perfectly still while the person is being assisted in mounting the horse.

Prior to accepting the donation of a horse, most therapeutic riding centers will

- Evaluate the horse’s conformation
- Evaluate the horse’s health using a thorough veterinary check
- Examine the horse’s gaits and way of going
- Assess the horse’s attitude, reliability and adaptability to new situations

Many programs require the horses to go through a trial period at the center before they are accepted. Only a select number of horses meet the strict qualifications set forth by these riding centers.

You can find a NARHA-affiliated therapeutic riding center near you on their website, [www.narha.org](http://www.narha.org).

## Colleges and Universities

Horses Going to School?

Many colleges, universities and private schools across the country have equine programs and accept donations of horses. These horses may be used for a riding program, breeding program, or needs associated with the curriculum of a pre-vet or veterinary degree.

Schools with an animal science department that includes an equine research component or a veterinary school may accept your horse to be used in teaching/research to benefit medical advancements in the equine field. Once the property of a university, you will (generally) not be able to place restrictions on the use of that horse. It is certainly acceptable to inquire about the type of research undertaken by that particular school.

Academic programs have varying requirements for the horses that are accepted as donations. In some cases the school may lease the horse for a certain period of time. As in any other legal agreement, be aware of all the legal details and potential liabilities associated with a lease.

Potential donations to be used in the riding programs are often evaluated using stringent criteria as far as soundness, disposition, amount of training and age. Institutions that have very strict donation requirements generally want the horse for the long-term. Schools that accept any and all donations tend to have a high turnover rate of horses within their program.

Horses accepted as a part of a university breeding program must meet breed and quality standards. Just because the horse is a mare, it doesn’t mean that she is destined to be a breeding animal.

Some schools specialize in a specific breed of horse — there are major universities that currently specialize in Arabians, Thoroughbreds, American Quarter Horses, and Morgans. Other school programs may be known for a specific equestrian discipline, such as hunters or reining horses. A horse that doesn't fit in one school's program may be an ideal candidate for another.

#### A Home for Life?

Many people assume that when a horse is donated to an educational institution, it will spend the rest of its life there. Once a horse is donated it becomes the property of the institution and may be sold immediately or at a later date to raise additional funds for that program.

Do your homework! Before donating your horse to any organization, make sure you understand, and are comfortable with, their policy on selling horses. The most important thing you can do is research the organization so that an informed decision is made about your horse's future.

#### Mounted Police Units

The mounted unit pursues a fourfold mission that consists of traffic control, crowd control, community relations, and prevention of street crime.

Public relations is a mounted unit forte. Seldom is public attention so magnetically drawn to police as it is to an officer on horseback. The expertise of mounted unit officers in crowd control is also renowned. Officers are used extensively at concerts, demonstrations, strikes, entertainment events, public celebrations, and the numerous assemblages that take place throughout the year. It has been estimated that one mounted officer on horseback has the effect of 10 officers on foot, depending on the demeanor of the crowd. The mounted unit has therefore earned the reputation for being in the vanguard whenever the police department is called upon to ensure the order and safety of large throngs of people.

What types of horses can be donated? Every mounted police unit has specific requirements but generally these apply:

- Sex – Geldings only
- Age – 3-9 years
- Height – Minimum of 15.2 hands, preferably taller
- Color – Solid darker colors with minimal white markings
- Conformation – Good withers; sturdy legs and feet; strong bone and muscle
- Health – Must be sound and in prime working condition; negative Coggins
- Horses with vices such as kicking, biting and cribbing would be disqualified

#### Do Horses Go to Jail?

Yes! Some retired horses spend their days in the prison system.

Not only does your horse benefit from the care but the inmates benefit as well. Many inmates have never been around large animals and building a bond with an animal helps teach them empathy and compassion. It's a great learning experience for the inmates to see and treat the ailments that come with horses that have been around the block, and each horse gets that special attention it might need. For many horses it's their last option, as many non-profit retirement facilities don't have the staff to treat lots of special needs cases, so it can be viewed as a hospice situation for the horses.

## IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK

Finding a new home for a horse is not always an easy job and various equine facilities play a role in providing care or finding new owners for horses. Whether an owner is searching for the perfect retirement farm or looking to find their horse a new job in therapeutic riding or in the mounted patrol, there are questions every owner should ask before giving up care and control of their horse.

In order to ensure that your horse is placed within the best-suited organization, please consider asking the organization(s) the following:

1. Does the facility subscribe to accepted guidelines for operating such facilities, such as the "Care Guidelines for Rescue and Retirement Facilities" prepared by the American Association of Equine Practitioners?
2. Is it an entity exempt from federal tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code?
3. Does it file IRS Form 990 and forms required by the state? Will the facility provide copies?
4. Does it have a mission statement and a board of directors? Who are they?
5. How long has the facility been operating?
6. If it is a facility that will use the horse, how will it be used?
7. Does the facility have ample room for horses to graze and/or move about?
8. Will the horse stay at the facility or be placed into foster care? If the facility uses foster care, how are foster homes screened?
9. Does it have an agreement regarding the use, boarding or care of the horse?
10. If it is a facility that adopts horses out, what are the requirements for adoption? Does the facility follow up with the new owners to ensure the horse is being properly cared for?
11. Does the facility have a policy against breeding or restrict the horse's use in any way?
12. What is the facility's post-adoption policy on breeding and use?
13. If this is an adoption facility, are stallions gelded upon entry and before adoption?
14. What becomes of the horse when the adopter or the user no longer wants the horse?

15. Will the organization advise you before your horse is transferred to a new owner?
16. Can the original owner ask for the horse back?
17. Will the facility provide routine and emergency veterinary and dental care and farrier needs?
18. Does the facility provide training/re-training for the horse?
19. What are the physical characteristics of the facility, including barns, pastures and shelters?
20. Can owners visit if they wish?
21. Have any welfare charges been brought against the facility?
22. Does the facility euthanize horses that cannot be placed? If so, will the facility notify the owner beforehand?

### Rescue vs. Retirement

Many people are confused when it comes to the topic of rescue versus retirement regarding the subject of horse welfare.

What is the difference between a rescue and a retirement facility?

#### I. Rescue

- Neglected, abused horses
- Emergency care
- Horses removed from owners or abandoned
- Horses may be adopted out when recovered from trauma
- Programs funded by donations, non-profit
- "Owner Initiated Surrenders" are not generally accepted

#### II. Retirement

- Older, pensioned horses
- Injuries that make them unsuitable for work
- Maintenance care needed
- Horses are privately owned
- Private boarding facilities, for-profit

## PROGRAMS THAT EXTEND THE USEFUL LIVES OF HORSES



Supply and demand — they are the ingredients that form the foundation for nearly all successful business models. Markets are sound and profitable when there is a healthy balance between the two. The theory holds true for the horse market as well. Often, however, owners may not be aware of the demands that exist for horses that may be “unwanted” by some, but desired by others.

The purpose of this chapter is to show some of the many programs already in place by horse breed organizations and other groups, in which horses are needed by participants. From trail riding enthusiasts to horse show exhibitors, people are searching every day for horses that fit their lifestyles and interests.

By understanding the activities encouraged by breed organizations, owners of some unwanted horses might find a good fit, and a good market, among people seeking horses for organized shows and recreational events.

Following is a listing of some of the most popular programs and activities underway today and some true-life stories of unwanted horses that developed into champions.

### Competitive Horse Shows

Nearly all horse breed associations offer opportunities for friendly competition. Although a horse may be retired or reaching advanced years of maturity, horse shows offer outlets to help keep the horse active and involved. The registries offer several different disciplines with classes ranging from leadline to saddle seat pleasure to barrel racing. A horse owner can often find a way to keep horses involved for a long time in the variety of disciplines offered in the showing world.

The majority of breed registries in the United States host local shows. More competitive riders enter their horses in national and world championship horse shows. The events are qualifying or non-qualifying, based on each association's standards. Contact the specific association you are interested in to find out more information on how to become involved in showing and what various other programs they offer.

The United States Equestrian Federation ([www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org)) is the national governing body for horse sports in the U.S.

The following organizations offer both competitive and noncompetitive options to keep your horse active.

## Horse Breed Association Programs

American Hackney Horse Society  
[www.hackneysociety.com](http://www.hackneysociety.com)

American Morgan Horse Association (AMHA)  
[www.morganhorse.com](http://www.morganhorse.com)

American Paint Horse Association (APHA)  
[www.apha.com](http://www.apha.com)

American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA)  
[www.aqha.com](http://www.aqha.com)

American Saddlebred Horse Association  
[www.asha.net](http://www.asha.net)

American Shetland Pony Club  
[www.shetlandminiature.com](http://www.shetlandminiature.com)

Appaloosa Horse Club (ApHC)  
[www.appaloosa.com](http://www.appaloosa.com)

Arabian Horse Association (AHA)  
[www.arabianhorses.org](http://www.arabianhorses.org)

International Andalusian and Lusitano Horse Association  
[www.ialha.org](http://www.ialha.org)

International Friesian Show Horse Association  
[www.friesianshowhorse.com](http://www.friesianshowhorse.com)

Missouri Fox Trotters Horse Breeders Association  
[www.mfthba.com](http://www.mfthba.com)

Palomino Horse Breeders of America (PHBA)  
[www.palominohba.com](http://www.palominohba.com)

Paso Fino Horse Association  
[www.pfha.org](http://www.pfha.org)

Pinto Horse Association (PtHA)  
[www.pinto.org](http://www.pinto.org)

Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association  
[www.twhbea.com](http://www.twhbea.com)

Welsh Pony and Cob Society  
[www.welshpony.org](http://www.welshpony.org)

## Wild Horses and Burros

One aspect of the unwanted horse situation that the coalition does not want to forget is the tens of thousands of America's wild horses and burros that are managed by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM has offered these horses for adoption for years under the Adopt-A-Wild Horse Program, but herd sizes continue to grow at a faster rate than horses are adopted. This is a growing part of the issue of unwanted horses, and a private organization has been created to help deal with this situation.

The Mustang Heritage Foundation is dedicated to helping increase the successful adoptions of America's excess Mustangs and burros. The Mustang Heritage Foundation works with the BLM and other adoption-oriented programs to find quality homes for these animals. In addition the foundation has created training programs designed to involve knowledgeable horsemen and horsewomen in the gentling of Mustangs prior to adoption. The organization is also committed to creating a more marketable horse through improving selection and expanding and enhancing training programs for critical mustang age groups.

Mustang Heritage Foundation

[www.mustangheritagefoundation.org](http://www.mustangheritagefoundation.org)

## Racehorses

Although many require a knowledgeable trainer/handler, with proper re-training, ex-racehorses are suitable for myriad horse-related activities. They have been successful at all levels of competition in multiple disciplines, including eventing, show jumping, barrel racing, dressage, trail riding, endurance, and roping. They also make excellent pleasure riding horses and companion animals. Those interested in providing a home in which to extend the useful life of an ex-racehorse can find information through the following organizations:

American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA)

[www.aqha.com](http://www.aqha.com)

The Jockey Club

[www.jockeyclub.com](http://www.jockeyclub.com)

National Thoroughbred Racing Association (NTRA)

[www.ntra.com](http://www.ntra.com)

United States Trotting Association (USTA)

[www.ustrotting.com](http://www.ustrotting.com)

## More Information

For an extensive listing of breed organizations and other groups that offer programs and activities for horses, see the *Horse Industry Directory* published annually by the American Horse Council. You can reach them at (202) 296-4031.

## SUCCESS STORIES: HORSES MOVING ON TO NEW CAREERS

### Highway Home

Highway Home was a familiar face and local hero on the Nebraska racing circuit because he was a multiple stakes winner, with earnings of \$148,000, and still racing at age 13. The Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation reported that several months after his race career ended, he was in an unhealthy condition, and he was rescued.

"Homie," with his sweet disposition and kind eyes, is enjoying a relaxing life with his pasture pal, another rescue horse. He, along with his friend, will soon begin a new career at the Tulsa Boys' Home where he will be used in their therapeutic equine program. No doubt that "Homie" will become a favorite among the boys. The mutual trust and affection between a horse and a boy is the basis for the healing process for both horse and youngster. Once again, "Homie" will be a hero.

### Panamas Sun

Panamas Sun is truly an All American, serving with the United States Army's Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Program at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. This special horse serves in two official capacities: training and recreation. "Sun" directly impacts human welfare in providing training opportunities for our deploying soldiers and recreational opportunities for their families left behind.

A scarring injury in 1999 ended Sun's show career and left him without a job until he was purchased for Fort Bragg. Sun, with his docile manner and positive work ethic, has proved himself to be a dedicated member of our Armed Forces community.

Sun provides a willing mount to train the elite United States Army Special Forces soldiers for equestrian missions in the Middle East during times of war. Learning equestrian skills enhances their mobility, safety and survival.

Sun provides opportunities for U.S. Army Special Forces Medics to learn livestock management skills, such as immunizations, farrier science and infection control, they use as they provide economic and humanitarian support during their global pursuits.

When Sun is not providing official Department of Defense training, he is providing a morale and recreational mission for both the military and civilian communities. Sun serves the formal Western and English riding academy programs. Sun grooms his students for their first horse competitions at Fort Bragg.

### Sportscar

In 1999, Gillian Clissold, then a professor of international relations at Georgetown University, was looking for a resale horse to compete through the Preliminary level of three-day eventing. Known for her skills in building partnership with horses most riders find too hot or too sensitive, Gillian purchased Sportscar, a small gray mare of unknown breeding that had pulled off a slaughterhouse-bound truck as a yearling eight years earlier.



*Sportscar competing at cross country*

The two forged a tremendous partnership that exceeded everyone's expectations. Gillian and Sportscar ascended the levels of eventing to the Advanced level, finishing in the top 20 percent at the Radnor CCI\*\* in 2002, completing the Fair Hill CCI\*\*\* in 2003, and finishing 16<sup>th</sup> at Fair Hill the following year.

In 2003, Sportscar was named "Mare of the Year" by the United States Eventing Association, and in 2004, Gillian received the Fair Hill International Sportsmanship Award.

Now retired from three-day eventing, Sportscar can be found competing in the jumper ring at United States Equestrian Federation "A" and "AA" rated horse shows.

## Tencle's Cat

Mounted patrol units are integral parts of police departments across the United States and throughout the world's major cities. Officers and mounts are highly respected for crowd management during major demonstrations and special events. The horses accepted into mounted patrol units must be of steady disposition and have utmost trust in their human partners.

This is not exactly a job for which many ex-racehorses are suited. However, one particular Thoroughbred ex-racehorse has found a new calling.

Tencle's Cat, formerly a \$30,000 racing prospect, is now with the Dallas, Texas, Police Department. "T.C.", as he is now known, had moderate success competing at Lone Star Park, but it was evident to his former owner, Virginia Skelton, that his future was not in racing. Mrs. Skelton did not want to see the gelding end up at an auction. She wanted to ensure that he went to a good home where he would be well cared for, so she approached the Dallas Police Department, stating that she'd help cover his expenses in exchange for a "tryout."

T.C. began his training under the tutelage of Tom Hall, a former longtime mounted patrol officer who, although officially retired, still serves the police department as an advisor and part-time horse trainer. He has been working with T.C., training him to cope with crowds, traffic, noises, and general city life.

## EUTHANASIA

Horse ownership undoubtedly comes with numerous responsibilities, and owners must be prepared to make good decisions regarding the health and welfare of their equines on a daily basis. One of the most difficult and emotionally draining responsibilities is determining, with the help of your veterinarian, the appropriate time to end a horse's life. It is a good idea to have a plan in place before you, as an owner, are faced with such a decision, because often times these situations arise in the form of an emergency and a decision must be made quickly.

Euthanasia is a term derived from the Greek words "eu," meaning good, and "thanatos," meaning death. Euthanasia means "good death."

According to the American Association of Equine Practitioners, justification for euthanizing a horse for humane reasons should be based on medical considerations as well as current and future quality of life issues for the horse. Some, but certainly not all, of the factors to be considered in evaluating the necessity for intentional euthanasia of a horse are

- Is the horse's condition chronic, incurable, and resulting in unnecessary pain and suffering?
- Does the condition of the horse present a hopeless prognosis?
- Is the horse a hazard to itself or to others around it?
- Will the horse require continuous medications for pain relief and suffering for the rest of its life?

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, there are only three acceptable methods of euthanasia for horses: barbiturate overdose given intravenously by a veterinarian, gunshot, and penetrating captive bolt. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages and must be considered on a case-by-case basis. According to Tom Lenz, DVM, who has written extensively on the topic, minimizing fear, anxiety and apprehension must be considered in determining which method is most appropriate. Additionally, Dr. Lenz says any human observer's psychological response to euthanasia of the animal must be considered.

### Barbiturate Overdose (given by a veterinarian)

The most commonly used barbiturate is sodium pentobarbital, which brings about a state of unconsciousness within a few seconds. The drug then shuts down the animal's brain function, including the part of the brain that controls cardiac and respiratory systems, bringing about the animal's death. Veterinarians may choose to inject a sedative prior to administering the barbiturate. This often makes the procedure less stressful for the owner or other bystanders to view.

The major advantage of the barbiturate overdose is its speed of action and minimal discomfort to the horse. The major disadvantages to this method are that only a

licensed veterinarian may administer the IV injection, and following euthanasia, the carcass will contain high levels of barbiturate, making it an environmental hazard. There is also a rare chance the horse will experience a reaction to the barbiturate.

The cost of this type of euthanasia varies throughout the country, varying between \$50 and \$150.

## **Gunshot**

The proper use of a firearm causes trauma in the cerebral hemisphere and brainstem and results in a painless, immediate death.

One advantage of gunshot is that there is less need for the animal to be restrained. Additionally, the carcass does not present any environmental dangers.

However, this method should never be attempted by an inexperienced person.

This method of euthanasia can be dangerous if performed improperly. The bullet may ricochet, for instance, and bystanders must use extreme caution during the procedure. It is also aesthetically displeasing to the owner and/or bystanders.

## **Captive Bolt**

Penetrating captive bolts are powered by gunpowder or compressed air. Similar to gunshot, it causes trauma to the cerebral hemisphere and brainstem, resulting in an instant, painless death. Additionally, the carcass is not an environmental threat.

The captive bolt may only be used by skilled individuals. This method may also be extremely displeasing for bystanders to observe.

## **Carcass Disposal**

Arrangements must be made for removal of the animal's remains following death, be it from natural causes or euthanasia. If the horse dies or is euthanized at an equine hospital, the hospital can take care of this for a fee. In other cases, the owner of the deceased must make arrangements, keeping in mind that in most states, it is the legal responsibility of the attending veterinarian to ensure the carcass is properly disposed; therefore veterinarians must possess specific knowledge of their area's regulations. If the owner does not follow local statutes, he or she may unintentionally cause legal problems for their veterinarian.

First and foremost, carcass disposal must be done in a manner that does not cause harm to other animals or humans. Regulations vary greatly from state to state with regard to animal species. Local agricultural extension offices are a useful resource for this type of information.

There are several commonly used methods of equine carcass disposal, including burial, landfills, composting, incineration, rendering and biodigesters.

## **Burial**

Regulations on horse burial vary from state to state and within states, from locality to locality. Many jurisdictions require the burial site be no fewer than 100 yards from wells, streams, and other water sources, and in some locales, it is illegal to bury a chemically euthanized horse. Generally, a trench 7 feet wide and 9 feet deep is sufficient, with at least 3 to 4 feet of dirt covering the animal's remains. In order to accomplish this, one needs access to a backhoe, which can be rented for a fee between \$250 and \$500, depending on the location.

## **Landfills**

Landfills are an alternative to burial. Keep in mind that not all municipal landfills accept animal carcasses, and those that do, do not necessarily take horses.

Additionally, some landfills that accept horse carcasses will not take the remains of a chemically euthanized animal. Costs can be higher, but tend to be between \$80 and \$150.

## **Incineration/Cremation**

While incineration/cremation of a horse carcass is very expensive, it is one of the most environmentally friendly solutions to body disposal. Cremating a 1,000-pound horse can cost between \$600 and \$2,000, depending on location and the current price of propane. The incinerators are regulated by strict environmental laws at both the federal and state level, thus providing control over air pollution. As the ashes pose no environmental threat, they may be returned to the owner and buried or may be sent to a landfill.

## **Rendering**

Rendering is an effective, affordable and environmentally safe method of livestock carcass disposal. The carcasses are "cooked" to destroy pathogens and produces end products such as bone than can be used in animal feeds. Rendering companies will normally pick up the remains and charge a fee ranging between \$75 and \$200, again depending on location. Only 50 percent of the states have rendering plants, the majority of which are concentrated in the Midwest.

## **Options on the Horizon**

### **Composting**

Composting, a controlled, sanitary decomposition of organic materials by bacteria, has recently gained popularity. It is performed in covered trenches or piles that must be located away from runoff and drinking water supplies to avoid contamination. The combination of vegetative material and moisture results in temperatures reaching at least 130°F, which, over the course of time, kills most pathogenic viruses and bacteria. It takes approximately 9 to 10 months to compost an intact horse carcass, and the end product is a spongy, odorless substance that can be used for soil supplementation.

Livestock composting is legal in every state except California, but even in states where the practice is permitted, it can be limited by carcass weight. Information on composting and its availability in your area may be obtained from your respective state's Department of Agriculture.

### **Biodigesters**

First developed in 1992, the biodigester is a machine similar to a pressure cooker. Using alkaline hydrolysis, biodigesters rapidly kill any potentially harmful wastes in the carcass. The machine can turn a 1,000-pound horse carcass into an aqueous solution of peptides, amino acids, sugars, soaps and powdered bone, all free of harmful pathogens. The remains are, in fact, sterile, and pose no environmental hazards and can therefore be disposed of at a local landfill or be used as fertilizer.

This method is becoming a popular method of carcass disposal with veterinary colleges and industrial research facilities. The veterinary colleges at the University of Florida, Texas A&M University, Colorado State University, and the University of Minnesota are just some schools that own and use biodigesters. The US Department of Agriculture also owns a machine. While the initial purchase price is costly, the operating costs offer significant savings over time and are more environmentally friendly than using commercial incinerators. For example, the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory purchased a biodigester for \$900,000 but estimates that they can dispose of a carcass for \$0.25 per pound, as opposed to \$0.75 per pound using an incinerator.

### **Other Considerations**

Plan ahead. It is important for all horse owners to think about and plan for the day their horse's life comes to an end. It is not something fun to think about, but death is inevitably part of life and dealing with it cannot be avoided. Enlisting the help of your vet and barn manager and relative, close friend, or neighbor, come up with a plan in the event your horse becomes ill or debilitated, or an emergency arises. Write it down and make sure it is easily accessible if you are unavailable should anything occur. Planning ahead may spare your horse needless suffering. It will also help you make sound decisions during what will be a very difficult time.

**Insurance:** If your horse is insured, be sure that you know your policy's requirements regarding euthanasia. For an insurance claim to be valid, companies often require prior notification and permission (except in extreme cases). Most insurance providers require that they be kept informed from the start of a horse's medical condition, especially if euthanasia is a potential outcome of the illness. In case of an emergency, it is up to the policy holder to notify the insurance provider. Some policies even require a second opinion before a horse is euthanized, but it is always up to the owner and veterinarian to decide what is best for the horse.

## **TAX RAMIFICATIONS OF CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS**

The decision to donate your horse to a charitable organization can be rewarding for you, your horse, and the charity. If your donation is eligible for a tax deduction, it is important to keep good records and research the charities to which you choose to donate. What follows is a summary of the tax code on charitable contribution of property, specifically horses. For reference, the general rule related to the deduction of the value of charitable donations is located in Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code; exceptions and limitations follow in further sections.



**The Charity:** Your donation will be tax deductible only if it is made to a properly formed and qualified Internal Revenue Code §501(c)(3) charitable organization. These include public charities, educational institutions, hospitals, governments, humane organizations, and private foundations.

In order to get the most tax benefit out of your donation, the horse must be used by the donee charity in connection with the charitable purpose for which it was formed. If a horse is donated to a charity that in turn uses the horse in a manner unrelated to its charitable purpose, then the donor taxpayer can deduct only their basis in the horse, which is usually the purchase price, less any depreciation; the basis in a home-bred horse would be zero.

It is important to note that if the charity simply sells the horse and keeps the profits, then the donor taxpayer's deduction is limited to the basis in the horse because the sale of the horse is unrelated to the charity's purpose. Thus, owner-initiated surrenders to an adoption program or re-training facility may not be eligible for the charitable deduction. Monetary gifts made concurrent with or subsequent to the surrender may be eligible for a tax deduction under charitable contribution rules, discussed at the end of this chapter.

Before finalizing the donation of your horse, you should examine the charity's IRS Exemption Certificate and get a statement in writing from the charity affirming the charity's tax exempt purpose and their intended use of the donated horse.

Some possible charities to research for horse donations include therapeutic riding centers, horse clubs, mounted police units, and schools and universities. A complete list of qualified organizations can be found in IRS Publication 78, available at <http://www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=96136,00.html>.

**The Donation:** As a general rule, you can deduct the fair market value of a horse donated to a charitable organization if

- The donation is made without expectation or receipt of a financial or economic benefit in return,

- The horse will be used by the charity in connection with its charitable purpose, and
- The horse was held by the donor for sporting, breeding, or draft purposes for 24 months prior to the donation.

There are, of course, exceptions to the general rule that may reduce the amount of the deduction. For example, when a horse eligible for capital gain treatment has been depreciated and is donated to a charity, the amount of the gift is the value of the horse reduced by the amount of depreciation that has been taken. Section 170(e) of the Internal Revenue Code lists these exceptions, including horses eligible for capital gains treatment and a donation to a charity that does not relate to the charity's exempt purpose.

In addition, the total of all charitable contributions that can be deducted in one year cannot exceed 50% of the taxpayer's income in some cases and 30% in others, depending on the type of donee charity (IRC §170(b)).

**Required Records:** In all horse donations to a charity, the taxpayer must have a record of

- The name and address of the charity,
- The date of the donation,
- The location of the donation,
- A description of the horse in detail reasonably sufficient under the circumstances (note: the required amount of detail increases with the horse's value),
- The fair market value of the horse at the time of donation and the method used to determine the value, including a written and signed appraisal if used or required, and
- The terms of agreement relating to the horse's use or disposition.

If the horse is worth more than \$250, but less than \$5000, the taxpayer seeking the deduction must also have a written acknowledgment from the charity. The acknowledgment must include

- A description of the horse,
- A statement concerning whether or not any goods or services were provided to the donor by the charity in exchange for, in whole or part, the horse, and
- A description and good faith estimate of any value or services given by the charity in exchange for the horse.

If the horse is worth more than \$5000, the taxpayer seeking the deduction must also complete and file with their tax return IRS Form 8283, available at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8283.pdf>. In addition to the information above, Form 8283 requires the taxpayer to disclose (1) how the horse was acquired, (2) the date of

acquisition (approximate), and (3) the cost basis of the horse. In addition, the taxpayer must obtain a written appraisal by a qualified appraiser. Unless a herd of horses is donated to one charity at one time by one donor, each donated horse must have a separate written appraisal. If a herd is donated, then one appraisal is allowed, but it must describe and value each horse individually. Finally, the taxpayer must attach an appraisal summary to their tax return.

**Qualified Appraisal:** The qualified appraisal for horses valued at more than \$5000 must be completed not earlier than 60 days prior to the date of donation and not later than the due date of the tax return on which the deduction is taken.

The qualified appraisal must be conducted by a qualified appraiser, which is defined by the IRS as someone who

- Holds himself or herself out to be an appraiser or who performs appraisals on a regular basis;
- Is able to make appraisals of horses because of his or her qualifications;
- Is not within a group of disqualified people, including the donor, the person who sold, gave, or exchanged the horse to or with the donor, anyone who acted as an agent in the sale, exchange or gift of the horse (unless the donation is within two months of the date of acquisition and the appraisal value does not exceed the acquisition value), the donee, and any employees, spouses, or relatives of the people above; and
- Understands and acknowledges in writing that an intentionally false or fraudulent overstatement of the horse's value may subject the appraiser to penalties.

A declaration to the above and signed by the appraiser must be included with the appraisal summary. The fee charged for the appraisal, with a very limited exception for nonprofit and uncompensated appraisers, cannot be based on a percentage of the appraised value of the horse.

The written qualified appraisal must be prepared, dated and signed by the appraiser and must include

- A description of the horse(s);
- The physical condition of the horse;
- The date or expected date of the donation;
- The terms of agreement, if any, to the use, sale, or other disposition of the horse;
- The identity and qualifications of the appraiser, including background, professional memberships, education, etc.;
- A statement that the appraisal is being made for income tax purposes;
- The date of the appraisal;
- The appraised value of the horse(s);

- The method of evaluation; and
- The specific basis for valuation.

Appraisal Summary: Taxpayers who are deducting the value of a horse worth more than \$5000 must also attach an appraisal summary to the tax return on which the deduction is claimed. The summary must

- Be made on Schedule B IRS Form 8283,
- Be signed and dated by the charity,
- Be signed and dated by the qualified appraiser who prepared the qualified appraisal, and
- Contain information specified in Schedule B relating to the donor, the horse, the donee, and the appraiser.

Another tax issue to keep in mind during tax time is monetary gifts to qualified 501(c)(3) charitable horse organizations, including many rescue groups. Monetary gifts to charities are deductible as charitable contributions if made to a qualified organization, do not exceed specified limits (set forth in the tax code and usually no more than 50% of a taxpayer's income), and are truly a gift rather than an exchange for a financial or economic benefit.

It is important to remember to consult a tax professional whenever necessary while preparing your tax returns.

## CONCLUSION

This discussion of a complex and sometimes troubling issue should be concluded by simply pointing out that you are not alone. You have many options, and advice may be obtained from many organizations or individuals who will be willing to help you when you can no longer be the steward of your horse's life.

Visit [www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org](http://www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org) for a variety of resources that may help you ensure that your horse will be cared for through the balance of its natural life, or properly euthanized if necessary.

The Unwanted Horse Coalition's motto is "OWN RESPONSIBLY," and it will be happy to help you live up to that very promise you made on the day you bred or bought your horse.



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