



My Horse's Well-Being is jeopardized. Where Can I turn?

Horse owners come in as many varieties as their horses, but they have at least one thing in common: All horse owners share a responsibility to care for their horses' appropriately. What constitutes appropriate horse care differs from horse to horse and depends on several factors, including the climate the horse lives in, the age of the horse or even individual ailments from which a horse might suffer. When a horse's well-being is jeopardized for any reason, it is the responsibility of the owner to take action. Unfortunately, it is not always easy or even possible for owners to take action.

There are many reasons people are or become incapable of caring for their horses. Financial hardship, lack of horse-related education, psychological disorders, age, physical disability, difficult family situations, and lack of time are all reasons horses are sometimes neglected. Some horses are just not wanted anymore. Regardless of the reason for neglect, it is not fair to the horses. If you find yourself in a position where it is no longer feasible to care for a horse appropriately there are several options to consider.

1. **Sell Your Horse(s).** As simple as it may sound, this option is inconceivable to some horse owners who love their horses dearly and have had them for several years. Be realistic about what is best for the horse even if it is difficult for you. There are many people out there willing and able to give horses a happy home. There are two options for people wanting to sell their horses.
 - o Private Sale: This option gives horse owners a chance to meet, screen or even build a relationship with the buyer. Private sales can be initiated in many ways. Place a classified ad in the newspaper or a magazine, spread the word through word of mouth, tell 4-H groups, local breed clubs and trainers in your area. Post flyers in feed and tack stores and at horse shows. The Internet now provides an abundance of "horses for sale" sites. Just type "horses for sale" into your favorite search engine and find the site that is best for your horse. Determine your asking price by finding out how much other people are asking for horses similar to yours.
 - o Auction: Horse sales are sometimes the quickest way to find your horse a new home. Contact local sale barns or fairgrounds to get a copy of their auction schedule. Ask questions about placing a reserve on your horse or buy-back options. Be aware that your horse might not sell for a lot of money and you probably will not get to screen the buyer the way you would in a private sale. Still, auctions can be a great resource for placing your horse in a new home when you find yourself in a pinch and unable to care for them appropriately.

2. **Lease.** If your horse has a safe disposition and others can ride and handle him or her, leasing may be the perfect solution to some of your financial woes. Many people new to the horse industry like the idea of trying a horse out before taking the step to purchase. Lease agreements

ARABIAN HORSE ASSOCIATIONSM

10805 East Bethany Drive | Phone 303-696-4500
Aurora, Colorado 80014 | Fax 303-696-4599
www.ArabianHorses.org | info@ArabianHorses.org



vary according to what works best for the leaser and the lessee. Give someone the opportunity to get horse experience and help out with the costs of care.

3. **Surrender Your Horse.** There are horse retirement facilities, mounted patrol units, rescues, colleges and therapeutic riding centers that would love to give your horse a home. Each operation will have varying acceptance criteria, but below are several options for surrendering your horse.
 - Retirement/Rescue Facilities: The best way to find a facility near you is to do an Internet search. Once you have found a nearby facility, make a visit, do some research, and make sure your horse is going to a good home. A list of some retirement/rescue facilities by state can be found at www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org. There is sometimes a fee associated with surrendering a horse to a retirement or rescue facility in order to off-set the initial costs of taking on a new animal, but the fee is usually minimal and much less expensive than keeping the horse for another couple of months!
 - Colleges and Universities: Many colleges and universities have equine programs that take donated horses for use by students on performance teams or polo teams, in farrier school, or in reproduction programs. Contact the university closest to you and find out if they have the capacity to take your horse.
 - Therapeutic Riding Centers: The criteria for therapeutic riding horses are fairly specific. Nonetheless, many retired, older, or unwanted horses live out their lives being loved by kids with disabilities or disorders and are cared for by well-qualified horse professionals that make therapeutic riding their life. A list of therapeutic riding centers can be found on the PATH International website: www.pathintl.org.
 - Mounted Patrol Units: Contact a nearby police station to find out if they have a mounted patrol, if they are accepting horses and what the criteria is for mounted patrol horses.

4. **Humane Euthanasia.** The decision to euthanize your horse is a difficult one for obvious reasons. Euthanasia should be considered when your horse's quality of life and future quality of life is in question. If your horse is in chronic, incurable pain, has a hopeless diagnosis or prognosis, can no longer be around other horses, or is a hazard to other horses or people, euthanasia may be the best option. Contact the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) to further discuss euthanasia: www.aaep.org

It is difficult to admit that your horse is no longer receiving the life it deserves in your care. Make your last action as a horse owner a good one—exercise one of the above options or at the very least, ask for help. Further information can be found at: www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org.

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