

UNDERSTANDING YOUR OPTIONS FOR THE UNWANTED OR UNUSABLE HORSE.



Nobody likes to think about it, much less talk about it. But it's one of those topics that must be addressed.

We're talking about the unwanted, unneeded or unusable horse.

Over time, some horses become unusable because they get sick, injured or old. Some might be unmanageable because they are dangerous or unruly. In some instances, an owner's financial situation might change and they can no longer afford to properly care for the horse. Whatever the reasons, many people face the difficult decision of dealing with an unwanted or unusable horse.

In a perfect world, it would be ideal for every horse to live out its days in rich, green pastures. Unfortunately, that's not always the case. That's why we've developed this manual to help you explore the many options that are available to all horse owners. Above all, we want to ensure that your horse's health and welfare are at all times paramount to every other consideration.

PRIVATE SALE

Selling your horse to another person allows 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, Web sites, at 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 a list of auction nights. Additionally, some auctions are advertised in newspaper classifieds or at feed, tack and western stores, and on various Web sites.

There are a few things to remember at auction. First, unless you place a reserve on your horse or exercise a buy-back option, the price he brings in the arena is the price he sells for. Additionally, in many cases, you won't know who's buying your horse or where he's going. Be aware that there are all types of buyers at auction, including slaughter facilities.

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 who 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. Some owners will loan the horse in exchange for boarding and daily care. Be sure to visit with the owner of the horse you're interested in to explore the many leasing options available.

RESCUE AND RETIREMENT FACILITIES

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

While AQHA does not endorse one particular rescue facility, the Association supports the "Care Guidelines for Equine Rescue and Retirement Facilities," developed by the American Association of Equine Practitioners.

If you've decided to find a retirement home for your horse, we strongly encourage you to read this booklet and ensure the facility you're considering

operates by these guidelines. Be sure to look around while you're there. How do the other horses look? Is the place neat, clean and free of debris? While the vast majority of rescue and retirement facilities are run honestly and with the horse's best interests at heart, there have been reports of horses abused and neglected at a handful of facilities. In some instances, a retirement facility might require a donation to help defray the costs of caring for your horse.

A list of equine retirement facilities can be found by using any search engine on the World Wide Web.

Equine welfare organizations compiled by the American Horse Council:

**Adopt-A-Horse, Ltd. Inc.,
Sebring, Florida, (863) 386-0044**

**California Equine Retirement Foundation, Inc.,
Winchester, California, (909) 926-4190**

**Colorado Horse Rescue
Longmont, Colorado, (720) 494-1414**

**Days End Farm Horse Rescue, Inc
Lisbon, Maryland, (301) 854-5037**

**Horse Lovers United, Inc.
Salisbury, Maryland, (410) 749-3599**

**Horse Protection Association of Florida
Micanopy, Florida, (352) 466-4366**

**The Horse Protection League
Arvada, Colorado, (303) 216-0141**

**Horseaid
San Pedro, California, (310) 719-9094**

**Lost & Found Horse Rescue
York, Pennsylvania, (717) 428-9701**

**Redwings Horse Sanctuary
Lockwood, California, (831) 386-0135**

**The Retired Equine Adoption Society of the Northeast (REASON)
Harveys Lake, Pennsylvania, (570) 333-5266**

**Retirement Home for Horses, Inc.
Alachua, Florida, (386) 462-1001**

**Ryerss Farm for Aged Equines
Pottstown, Pennsylvania, (610) 469-0533**

FRIENDS WITH LAND

Many horse owners have friends who own acreage that's suitable for horses (safe fencing and sufficient access to good grass and water). Perhaps there is an opportunity to ask a friend if you can retire your horse to his pasture. In some cases, you might offer a nominal payment each month for the retirement. If your horse has injuries or health problems, pasturing might not be a good option unless you know the horse will get regular veterinary attention.

EUTHANASIA

The term euthanasia is derived from the Greek terms "eu" meaning "good" and "thanatos" meaning "death." A good death would be one that occurs with minimal pain and at the appropriate time in the horse's life to prevent unnecessary pain and suffering. Although euthanasia is a difficult decision, it gives you, the owner, total control over the way your horse's life comes to a conclusion. Additionally, euthanasia is often the most humane way to deal with end-of-life decisions.

The decision to euthanize your horse should be based on both medical considerations as well as your horse's current and future quality of life.

The following criteria (not all criteria need to be met for every case) should be considered in evaluating the necessity for euthanization of a horse.

Is the horse's condition chronic, incurable and resulting in unnecessary pain and suffering?

Does the horse's condition present a hopeless prognosis for life?

Is the horse a hazard to itself, other horses or humans?

Will the horse require continuous medication for the relief of pain and suffering for the remainder of its life?

If the horse is suffering but treatable, is proper and recommended care of the horse within the means of the owner or rescue/retirement facility, such that the health and safety of the other horses are not compromised?

Is the horse constantly and in the foreseeable future unable to move unassisted and interact with other horses or exhibiting behaviors that prohibit a decent quality of life?

When it's time to make this difficult end-of-life decision, AQHA recommends contacting an American Association of Equine Practitioners member veterinarian to handle the euthanasia process and disposal of the horse. In many areas of the country, there are laws governing the burial or disposal of

horses following euthanasia via intravenous anesthetic. Be sure to talk with your veterinarian about these regulations.

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Many colleges and universities use horses for their equine programs or for research programs that benefit the industry. Selection criteria for horses will vary according to the university, but you should check in your state or neighboring states to see if there are colleges or universities that would be willing to take a horse. In many cases, these horses receive excellent care from the students attending the school.

A condensed list of universities that use horses or have veterinary schools includes:

Auburn University	Auburn, Alabama
University of California at Davis	Davis, California
Colorado State University	Fort Collins, Colorado
Cornell University	Ithaca, New York
University of Florida	Gainesville, Florida
University of Georgia	Athens, Georgia
University of Illinois	Urbana, Illinois
Iowa State University	Ames, Iowa
Kansas State University	Manhattan, Kansas
Louisiana State University	Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Michigan State University	East Lansing, Michigan
Middle Tennessee State University	Murfreesboro, Tennessee
University of Minnesota	St. Paul, Minnesota
Mississippi State University	Mississippi State, Mississippi
University of Missouri	Columbia, Missouri
University of Nebraska	Lincoln, Nebraska
North Carolina State University	Raleigh, North Carolina
Ohio State University	Columbus, Ohio
Oklahoma State University	Stillwater, Oklahoma
Oregon State University	Corvallis, Oregon
University of Pennsylvania	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Purdue University	West Lafayette, Indiana
University of Tennessee	Knoxville, Tennessee
Texas A&M University	College Station, Texas
Tufts University	North Grafton, Massachusetts
Tuskegee University	Tuskegee, Alabama
Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine	Blacksburg, Virginia
Washington State University	Pullman, Washington
West Texas A & M University	Canyon, Texas
Western University of Health Sciences	Pomona, California
University of Wisconsin-Madison	Madison, Wisconsin

NORTH AMERICAN RIDING FOR THE HANDICAPPED ASSOCIATION, INC. (NARHA)

The North American Riding for the Handicapped Association is a membership-based organization that fosters safe, professional, ethical and therapeutic equine activities through education, communication, standards and research for people with and without disabilities.

NARHA promotes equine facilitated therapy and activity programs in the United States and Canada. More than 650 NARHA program centers serve 30,000 individuals with disabilities. Each year, dozens of new centers initiate programs, and thousands of individuals profit from these beneficial activities.

At NARHA centers, horses are valued partners in a relationship. NARHA centers are highly selective when accepting horses into a program. Many horses at NARHA centers are donated, volunteered or leased by horse owners in the community. When selecting a horse to participate in a program, NARHA centers look for a horse that is ideal and suitable for equine assisted activities and therapy.

It is important to note that minor health issues in a horse might be acceptable. However, horses must be sound enough to work regularly. Centers will evaluate and observe a prospective horse's:

- Conformation
- Health
- Age
- Gaits and manner of going
- Attitude, reliability and adaptability

By donating a horse, you will not only assist individuals with disabilities, but you might also be eligible for a tax deduction. To explore opportunities on how your horse can make a difference, contact the NARHA center nearest you (narha.org). In many instances, you can develop an ongoing giving campaign with the NARHA center that has accepted your horse and enjoy the tax benefits for years to come.

Note that if your horse is accepted by a NARHA facility and for any reason doesn't fit their program at a later date, the facility has the option of selling your horse.

SECOND CAREERS

Depending upon the health and soundness of your horse, an option might be to explore the viability of a second career. For example, many racing American Quarter Horses go on to become outstanding speed-event horses in the show arena or top mounts for ropers and other cowboys competing in rodeo events. If your horse excelled in the show ring, consider giving him to a young person in 4-H or someone just beginning his or her show career.

Again, depending on his overall health, an older horse that you might consider unusable could be the perfect teacher for a young person or new competitor. Evaluate your horse's strengths and see if a second career is an option. A second career you might not be aware of is public service. Thousands of American Quarter Horses are serving the public as police mounts, patrolling America's parks and assisting search-and-rescue operations. Look around your area and visit with your police, sheriff and parks departments to see if they have mounted units.

PROCESSING FACILITIES

An option unthinkable by many horse owners (and we respect these owners' beliefs) is slaughter. There are three horse processing plants in the United States where approximately 50,000 horses are processed annually.

Horses that are processed are traditionally unserviceable, vicious or otherwise unacceptable in today's equestrian community. The plants are federally regulated with on-site U.S.D.A. Veterinarians, and the processing conditions are acceptable to both the American Veterinary Medical Association and American Association of Equine Practitioners.

Certainly, many horse owners would not consider this as an option for their unwanted horse, but for certain horses it provides a humane alternative to additional suffering or possibly dangerous situations. We respect the right of the responsible horse owner to choose this option when applicable.

We hope this booklet helps you understand some of the options that might be available should you be faced with a situation in which your horse becomes unusable, unwanted or unneeded.

Our hope is that all horse owners are responsible ones who explore their options should they find themselves needing to sell, donate or euthanize a horse.

AQHA is committed to the following beliefs:

- **Every American Quarter Horse, all other horses and all animals, shall, at all times, be treated humanely and with dignity, respect and compassion.**
- **Stringent rules established by and enforced by AQHA demand that American Quarter Horse breeders, owners, trainers and exhibitors are continually responsible for the well-being and humane treatment of any American Quarter Horse entrusted to their care.**
- **Above all, the American Quarter Horse's welfare is paramount to other considerations. The continual development of procedures, which ensure fair competition and humane treatment of the breed and all other animals involved in AQHA events, supersede all other concerns.**

AMERICAN
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