



## HOLD THAT LINE

Morning Line hangs on to win Pa. Derby



## ◀ SEPTEMBER SALE'S SURPRISING REBOUND

- KEE'S FIRST-CROP SIRES/2824
- APART'S SUPER DERBY/2845

# <sup>T H E</sup> Blood-Horse<sup>®</sup>

International Thoroughbred Breeding and Racing

BloodHorse.com  
October 2, 2010/No.40

S P E C I A L R E P O R T

## Unwanted Horses

HOW THE INDUSTRY  
IS DEALING WITH  
LIFE AFTER RACING

# What's Going on Here

To comment on this column,  
visit [BloodHorse.com/  
WhatsGoingOn Here](http://BloodHorse.com/WhatsGoingOnHere)



## Finding Homes for Them All

**T**he buy-back rate at the recently concluded Keeneland September yearling sale became the sale's most significant statistic because it dropped to 26.7% from 27.5%. The improvement in trade over last year meant at least 30 more horses found new homes than would have otherwise had the buy-back rate stayed the same as in 2009.

Keeneland deserves a lot of credit for shaking up the sale's format. The first two select evening sessions were successful as was extending Book Two across four days, which produced a solid average price of \$120,000.

Sellers and their agents get most of the credit for stimulating trade, however, because they were realistic with their reserve prices. It's a tough nut to swallow going into a sale knowing the value of your horse, based on stud fee,

the RNA rates were so low, it kept people in the pavilion bidding."

In the best of all possible worlds, every yearling offered at a Keeneland sale would find a buyer, race productively, then go to stud or to pampered retirement and a possible second career. But the real world doesn't work that way, and some September yearlings are destined to become unwanted horses.

The plight of unwanted Thoroughbreds has struck a chord in many segments of the industry, and racing states now have a variety of retirement and retraining programs, from large-scale to mom-and-pop. All of these programs struggle to find room for the sheer number of ex-racehorses, not to mention securing the funding to feed and care for them. It costs an estimated \$2,300 a year to take care of a rescued horse, according to the Unwanted Horse Coalition, an equine industry alliance working to reduce the number of unwanted horses and improve their welfare.

Slaughter is in the future of an estimated 7,000 former racehorses every year, despite the closure in 2007 of U.S. processing plants. These racehorses are among the estimated 90,000 or so that are now shipped annually to Canada and Mexico to meet their ends.

This week *The Blood-Horse* looks at the unwanted horse issue, how it's being addressed, how other racing countries deal with ex-racehorses, and how some horses are saved while others disappear from the racing landscape. The pros and cons of slaughter are not debated, though Barbara Luna, program administrator for the Pennsylvania Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association "Turning For Home" program, presents a strong argument for alternatives to slaughter. Dr. Tom Lenz, former chairman of the Unwanted Horse Coalition, notes that while the industry cannot eliminate unwanted horses, it can minimize the problem.

The coalition is at the forefront of the effort. Its initiatives include:

- Promoting responsible ownership through education
- Helping equine groups become more involved
- Encouraging the gelding of stallions to reduce overbreeding and to provide more manageable riding horses
- Working closely with equine groups that provide euthanasia programs and clinics

The coalition and other groups deserve accolades for bringing the problem of unwanted horses to the forefront and for seeking solutions. 

*Special Projects Editor Jacqueline Duke contributed to this column.*

***In the best of all possible worlds, every yearling offered at Keeneland would find a buyer***

is really 35-40% less than what you actually paid. But sellers bit that bullet and horses changed hands. In 2009 the average RNA price was \$52,628, and five of those buy-backs brought a final bid of \$500,000 or more. Two horses were bought back for \$900,000. This year the average RNA price was \$48,447. There was a son of A.P. Indy

that was bought back for \$1.25 million on the second night, but the rest of the sale saw only one other RNA with a final bid above \$500,000.

By keeping the reserves reasonable, consignors were forcing buyers to raise their hands in the sales pavilion instead of hoping for a deal back in the barns.

"If someone RNA'd a horse far beyond the market, there was no return visit to the barn," said Kerry Cauthen, managing partner of Four Star Sales. "But because most of



**Eric Mitchell, Editorial Director  
and Editor-in-Chief,**  
[emitchell@bloodhorse.com](mailto:emitchell@bloodhorse.com)





# Call to Action

## Racing Attempts to Tackle Unwanted Horse Issue

BY TOM LAMARRA

**P**erception often isn't reality, but it might well be when it comes to unwanted horses in the United States.

A 2009 survey commissioned by the Unwanted Horse Coalition may be the best indicator. From a sampling of more than 23,000—horse owners, industry stakeholders, rescue and adoption facilities, and even non-horse owners—about 85% said unwanted horses are a “big problem.”

Of the same group, about 24% said unwanted horses were a big problem three years earlier.

So what changed? There have always been problems with unwanted horses—and unwanted animals in general—so why the strong shift in such a short period of time?

**Typical case:** This Thoroughbred mare was found emaciated and pregnant at a Kentucky farm. Animal control officers alerted the Kentucky Equine Humane Center, where the mare now lives with her recently born foal.

ANNE M. LEBERHARDT

A real change in society's awareness of how animals should be treated has occurred, fed largely by a greater perception that there are serious problems.

Participants in the UHC survey—the most detailed of its kind—hit on all the major contributors to the problem of unwanted horses: the downturn in the economy; closing of U.S. processing plants; indiscriminate breeding practices; expenses associated with euthanasia; a lack of buyers; and an overall lack of responsibility on the part of horse owners.

The survey showed the economy by far was the biggest contributor, according to 74% of respondents, followed by closure of processing plants (48% of respondents), indiscriminate breeding (40%), and the high cost of euthanasia and carcass disposal (23%).

Unwanted horses are defined as those that are no longer wanted by their current owner because they are old, injured, sick, unmanageable, unable to meet expectations, or unaffordable by their owner. U.S. government agencies report there are roughly 170,000 such horses each year, including feral horses.

For most of the last decade, many unwanted horses were sent to slaughterhouses. Statistics put the 2007 estimate at about 140,000—58,000 at U.S. processing plants, while 45,000 were exported to Mexico and 36,000 exported to Canada.

By the end of 2007, all three U.S. slaughterhouses had closed, leading to an increase in traffic across the southern and northern borders. The United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service noted “concerns were

raised about the fate of unwanted horses” and the possibility they could “overwhelm the capacity of rescue organizations.”

Based on input from the about 60 rescue and adoption facilities surveyed by the UHC, as well as government statistics, the equine industry would need about \$25 million to care for horses no one wants. It costs about \$2,300 a year to care for one horse.

Of the surveyed facilities, 39% are at full capacity and 30% at near capacity. The four “most appealing solutions” in the survey are education on responsible ownership; financially supporting rescue and adoption facilities; reopening U.S. processing plants; and providing more resources for humane euthanasia.

The UHC—a broad alliance of equine organizations that have joined together under the American Horse Council—and

racing groups in general are viewed as pro-slaughter because they don't vehemently oppose it. The issue, however, is much more complicated.

Many horse owners and racing participants provide outstanding care for equines and wouldn't ship their horses to slaughterhouses no matter the circumstances. But they also understand the issue of unwanted horses and the need for various options, even those that might be viewed as negative.

In a perfect world the more accepted options would be widely embraced and there would be no need for slaughter. But even with the closure of U.S. slaughterhouses, demand is there from other countries for horse meat.

The Humane Society of the United States is anti-slaughter, but it generally supports many initiatives undertaken by the horse industry and has a few of its own. The HSUS recognizes euthanasia as a "gentle, painless death" and estimates about 99% of horse owners employ euthanasia for old or ill equines.

The HSUS and other groups have targeted not only alleged practices in slaughterhouses but the manner in which horses are shipped to plants. The Washington, D.C.-based organization contends there are other options.

"The (USDA) documents that more than 92% of horses who go to slaughter are in good condition—they will not need to be euthanized," the HSUS states in a position paper. "Some 900,000 horses die annually

### Perceptions Of The Unwanted Horse Problem

	Stakeholders *n=2,245	Rescue/Adoption Facilities n=60	Horse Owners n=20,484	Non-horse Owners n=422
Number of Unwanted Horses Is Increasing	96%	93%	96%	93%
Feel Unwanted Horses Are a Big Problem in Past Year	86%	87%	88%	82%
Feel Unwanted Horses Were a Big Problem 3 Years Ago	22%	28%	20%	26%
n=TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS ANSWERING THE QUESTION. SOURCE—UNWANTED HORSE COALITION / THE AMERICAN HORSE COUNCIL				

### Familiarity/Concern About The Unwanted Horse Problem

	Stakeholders *n=2,245	Rescue/Adoption Facilities n=60	Horse Owners n=20,484	Non-horse Owners n=422
Familiarity with Problem	77%	97%	82%	46%
Concern with Problem	95%	97%	95%	86%
n=TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS ANSWERING THE QUESTION. SOURCE—UNWANTED HORSE COALITION / THE AMERICAN HORSE COUNCIL				

### Top Contributors To The Unwanted Horse Problem

	Stakeholders *n=2,245	Rescue/Adoption Facilities n=60	Horse Owners n=20,484	Non-horse Owners n=422
The Economy	73%	80%	73%	71%
Closing of Processing Facilities	56%	35%	61%	41%
High Cost of Euthanasia/ Carcass Disposal	22%	23%	25%	22%
Change in Breed Demand/ Indiscriminate Breeding	30%	53%	37%	42%
n=TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO ANSWERING THE QUESTION. SOURCE—UNWANTED HORSE COALITION / THE AMERICAN HORSE COUNCIL				

and are safely disposed of by means other than slaughter, and the infrastructure can easily absorb an increase in numbers.

"More than one million cattle die on the farm each year—with no resulting environmental hazards. Rendering, incineration, and burial are all options, depending on local laws."

According to the HSUS, the average cost for veterinarian-administered euthanasia and carcass disposal is \$225. It calls the cost "simply part of responsible horse ownership."

The UHC puts the bill at \$300-\$500 per horse. The average cost of donating a horse to a retirement or retraining facility

is \$1,000.

"Euthanasia has to be an option," said an industry official who noted the sensitive nature of the topic. "It's certainly a better option than slaughter—at least it's humane. And I think people are coming to the conclusion that you can't stockpile horses."

The UHC adopted a strategic plan in late June that includes working with other organizations such as state horse councils in providing haybanks and feedbanks, euthanasia and castration clinics, and equine wellness programs. It currently is deciding whether to serve as a clearinghouse for such programs and perhaps get involved in awarding funds for such purposes.

The latter is complicated, so the UHC is taking more time studying the ramifications of handling funds.

"You're talking about a lot of money," AHC president Jay Hickey said. "We should walk before we run. We'd be inundated with requests."

Dan Rosenberg, president of Thoroughbred Charities of America, has suggested a need for facility accreditation. The TCA in the past 20 years has given about \$17 million to 200 organizations, including those that care for horses; accreditation would assist the TCA in identifying placement facilities, Rosenberg said.

"There are two really important parts," Rosenberg said. "The TCA wants to be sure the money is being spent wisely, because



Horses in a feedlot in Montana await export to Canada



we have a responsibility to our donors to make sure their money is used effectively.

“The other issue is making sure these rescue and retirement facilities are taking good care of horses and that minimal standards are being adhered to. There may be some organizations that may not know how to take care of horses properly. The TCA and other organizations have a responsibility to make sure these things don’t happen.”

The TCA has a detailed grant application process that includes site visits, veterinary reports, financial reports, and size of a facility, among other things. Industry meetings continue on the accreditation process and the best way to implement it.

Progress in the field has advanced. The UHC this summer launched a program called “Operation Gelding,” which provides funds and materials to assist organizations, associations, and events seeking to sponsor castration clinics. Seed money for the program came from the UHC and the American Association of Equine Practitioners Foundation.

UHC chairman Dr. Doug Corey noted the clinics will help prevent over-breeding and produce more trainable horses.

Reports of horses being found neglected in fields aren’t uncommon, and this year there have been a few high-profile cases in the Thoroughbred industry. Many cases, however, involve private property, which makes monitoring and regu-



Horses in an Ontario feedlot

lation much tougher.

The racing industry, meanwhile, has taken steps to offer options for care in a controlled setting: the racetrack.

The National Thoroughbred Racing As-

sociation Safety and Integrity Alliance, formed two years ago, made racehorse aftercare a key part of its code of standards. The alliance, by virtue of its membership, deals with Thoroughbred horses, while the broader UHC addresses the problem on an all-breeds basis.

At no time have racetracks been more involved in the aftercare process. Some have their own programs—Finger Lakes Gaming & Racing, Parx Racing, and Suffolk Downs, for example—while others have affiliated with existing local retirement facilities such as the California Retirement Management Account; CANTER, which is based in the Mid-Atlantic region; Days End in Maryland; Kentucky Equine Humane Center; and ReRun.

“You can talk all day long about whose responsibility it is,” alliance executive director Mike Ziegler said. “Our approach is to encourage the racetracks to put together

programs in conjunction with horsemen to specifically and locally address the issue.

“I think through the accreditation process we have seen tracks move the ball forward, where previously programs had been only informally in place. Things are moving forward in regard to general industry awareness, but we still have a lot of work to do.”

The UHC reports there are more than 400 equine care facilities in the U.S. The NTRA did further research, and Ziegler said there may be at least 900, including individuals who

Common Reasons Horses Become Unwanted				
	Stakeholders *n=2,245	Rescue/Adoption Facilities n=60	Horse Owners n=20,484	Non-horse Owners n=422
Could No Longer Afford Horse	83%	72%	81%	82%
Horse Was Too Old/Injured	68%	94%	69%	61%
Lost Interest or Use for Horse	53%	45%	46%	32%
Change In Employment Status	22%	25%	25%	27%
Horse Was Unmanageable	22%	23%	28%	18%
n=TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS ANSWERING THE QUESTION. SOURCE—UNWANTED HORSE COALITION/ THE AMERICAN HORSE COUNCIL				

Current Situations At Rescue/Retirement/Adoption Facilities		
	Average Per Facility	Estimate 430* U.S. Facilities
Maximum Rate of Occupancy	42 Horses	18,060 Horses
Current Occupancy	81%	
Horses Turned Away	26 Horses**	11,180 Horses
Annual Operating Budget	\$73,000	\$31,390,000
Annual Budget per Horse	\$2,300	
*THE AMERICAN HORSE DEFENSE FUND LISTS 432 FACILITIES IN ITS NATIONAL DATABASE. **PRIMARY REASON HORSES ARE TURNED AWAY IS DUE TO INDIVIDUAL FACILITIES CURRENTLY OPERATING AT MAXIMUM CAPACITY. NOTE THAT MANY TRY TO FIND ANOTHER FACILITY TO ASSIST IN THE HORSE'S CARE. SOURCE—UNWANTED HORSE COALITION/ THE AMERICAN HORSE COUNCIL		

## Model Program

In 1984, 9-year-old Promised Road raced for the last time. From 65 starts he had a record of 9-9-3 and earned \$39,547.

The road before this undistinguished Thoroughbred looked anything but promising, but the bay gelding was fortunate. He headed off the track and onto a farm near New Paltz, N.Y., the first resident of the vocational training program at Wallkill Correctional Facility, established by the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation.

Wallkill was a pioneer of sorts, coordinating inmate rehabilitation with racehorse retirement and finding second careers for former runners. Similar programs have followed in an attempt to offer the horse industry more options for unwanted equines.

The farm at Wallkill provides retired horses with a home while offering inmates an opportunity to work with horses under the TRF’s care. Jim Tremper, the farm manager and vocational instructor, was there to greet Promised Road, and he has overseen the arrival of the hundreds of other Thoroughbreds that have called Wallkill home over the last 26 years.

Wallkill currently houses 46 horses; at times, the numbers are much higher, according to Tremper. In the best-case scenario, responsible owners apply to retire a horse with the TRF, agreeing to contribute to the horse’s support.

Some horses are discovered at auctions and in slaughter pens; others are

rescued from neglectful or abusive situations. A number of horses from owner Ernie Paragallo’s farm found temporary or permanent homes at Wallkill.

The horses live in paddocks and barns built by the inmates, who also feed and care for the horses. While most of the men have had no experience with horses, a few have backgrounds that make them invaluable assets.

Steven Emery said he worked at the racetrack before his incarceration and, as an inmate program associate, is Tremper’s assistant. Tremper calls him “my number-one man.”

“I like being around horses. It takes a lot of time, a lot of love,” Emery said.

Emery works with a horse rescued from the farm of Paragallo, who was convicted on animal cruelty charges earlier this year.

“I had to get him comfortable to work with me,” Emery said. “I fed him. I gave him snacks. I petted him. I taught him how to let me put the halter on. When I tried to pick up his foot, he tried to kick a couple of times, but when he saw that I wasn’t hurting him, he just gave it to me.”

The once-neglected horse lives not far from Klabin’s Gold, who won the 1998 Hirsch Jacobs Stakes at Pimlico Race Course and who in 2002 was discovered at Suffolk Downs, underweight and with three fractured legs. Now, he gallops across paddocks. Nearby is 26-year-old Quick Call, who twice won the grade II Forego Stakes at Saratoga.

Tremper said the program at Wallkill has succeeded on two fronts: It has provided horses with homes and allowed them to assist in the rehabilitation of inmates.

By Teresa A. Genaro

take in horses and pay for their care.

The racetrack programs are considered a major step forward from a practical and public standpoint. Still, the perception of some in the field who spend time and money rescuing horses is one of skepticism.

"A lot has been done, but my take on it is the racing industry has been more focused on the public relations aspect than intending to sit down and figure out how to solve the problem," said Anne Russek, a Virginia horsewoman whose daughter operates a retraining facility. "Each track comes on board because of negative publicity—that's a bad way to make policy. That's putting the cart before the horse."

Russek and others believe much more needs to be done. Though the alliance code of standards deals with aftercare, it doesn't address the lack of race-track and regulatory enforcement that may undermine the process; for instance, there are frequent reports of horses leaving tracks on vans unchecked by security personnel.

Individuals with knowledge of the situation said having an anti-slaughter policy in place is meaningless unless steps are taken to ensure horses are properly tracked.

"It all boils down to enforcement," Russek said. "There is an underground transportation system. Questions need to be asked (when horses leave the premises). 'Who is the horse? Where is the horse going? Where is the paperwork?' This isn't rocket science. It could all easily be in a database."

Whether any action is taken in that regard remains to be seen. The safety and integrity alliance is, however, attempting to ramp up education programs for members.

The organization's professional education seminar Oct. 19 at Keeneland in Lexington will include a panel discussion on race-horse aftercare. Ziegler said it has become apparent more information needs to be disseminated.

"Member racetracks are required to participate in continuing education," Ziegler said. "We've found there is a dearth of opportunities out there. There's also nothing for trainers, who may need direction concerning best practices." 📌

## Equine Rescue Resource Guide (This is not intended to be a comprehensive list.)

### CALIFORNIA

**California Equine Retirement Foundation (CERF)**  
951-926-4190  
[www.cerfhorses.org](http://www.cerfhorses.org)

**CANTER California**  
408-313-1965  
[www.canterusa.org/california](http://www.canterusa.org/california)

**Tranquility Farm**  
661-823-0307  
[www.tranquilityfarmtbs.org](http://www.tranquilityfarmtbs.org)

**United Pegasus Foundation**  
661-823-9672  
[www.unitedpegasus.com](http://www.unitedpegasus.com)

### COLORADO

**Colorado Horse Rescue**  
720-494-1414  
[www.chr.org](http://www.chr.org)

**Horse Protection League**  
303-216-0141  
[www.cohpl.org](http://www.cohpl.org)

### CONNECTICUT

**H.O.R.S.E. of Connecticut, Inc.**  
860-868-1960  
[www.horseofct.org](http://www.horseofct.org)

### DELAWARE/MARYLAND

**CANTER Mid-Atlantic**  
301-980-0972  
[www.canterusa.org/midatlantic](http://www.canterusa.org/midatlantic)

**Days End Farm Horse Rescue**  
301-854-5037  
[www.defhr.org](http://www.defhr.org)

**Equine Rescue & Rehabilitation**  
[www.horserescue.com](http://www.horserescue.com)

**Horse Lovers United, Inc.**  
410-749-3599  
[www.horseloversunited.com](http://www.horseloversunited.com)

**Mid-Atlantic Horse Rescue**  
302-376-7297  
[www.midatlantichorserescue.org](http://www.midatlantichorserescue.org)

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

**Unwanted Horse Coalition**  
202-296-4031  
[www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org](http://www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org)

### FLORIDA

**Horse Protection Association of Florida, Inc.**  
352-466-4366  
[www.hpaf.org](http://www.hpaf.org)

### GEORGIA

**Georgia Equine Rescue League**  
404-656-3713 or 800-282-5852  
[www.gerltd.org](http://www.gerltd.org)

### IDAHO

**Orphan Acres, Inc.**  
208-882-9293  
[personal.palouse.net/orphanacres](http://personal.palouse.net/orphanacres)

### ILLINOIS

**Hooved Animal Humane Society**  
815-337-5563  
[www.hahs.org](http://www.hahs.org)

**CANTER Illinois**  
630-341-1582  
[www.canterusa.org/illinois](http://www.canterusa.org/illinois)

**Illinois Equine Humane Center**  
847-464-0169  
[www.ilehc.org](http://www.ilehc.org)

### KENTUCKY

**Kentucky Equine Humane Center**  
859-881-5849  
[www.kyehc.org](http://www.kyehc.org)

**Old Friends Equine Sanctuary**  
502-863-1775  
[www.oldfriendsequine.org](http://www.oldfriendsequine.org)

**Speak Up For Horses**  
859-445-7766  
or 513-474-6626  
[www.speakupforhorses.org](http://www.speakupforhorses.org)

**TRF Maker's Mark Secretariat Center**  
859-246-3080  
[www.thoroughbredadoption.com](http://www.thoroughbredadoption.com)

### MASSACHUSETTS

**CANTER New England**  
781-354-6291  
[www.canterusa.org/newengland](http://www.canterusa.org/newengland)

**Kings Bridge Equine Rescue, Inc.**  
413-283-7419  
[www.equineresq.org](http://www.equineresq.org)

**Suffolk Downs**  
617-567-3900  
[www.suffolkdowns.com/retirement.html](http://www.suffolkdowns.com/retirement.html)

### MICHIGAN

**CANTER Michigan**  
810-384-8410  
[www.canterusa.org/michigan](http://www.canterusa.org/michigan)

### MINNESOTA

**Minnesota Hooved Animal Rescue Foundation**  
763-856-3119  
[www.mnhoovedanimalrescue.org](http://www.mnhoovedanimalrescue.org)

**Misfit Acres**  
507-278-4876  
[www.misfitacres.com](http://www.misfitacres.com)

### NEW JERSEY

**Milestone Equine Rescue**  
908-995-9300  
[www.milestone.org](http://www.milestone.org)

**ReRun, Inc.**  
732-521-1370  
[www.rerun.org](http://www.rerun.org)

### NEW MEXICO

**The Horse Shelter**  
505-471-6179  
[www.thehorseshelter.org](http://www.thehorseshelter.org)

### NEW YORK

**Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation (TRF)**  
518-226-0028  
[www.trfinc.org](http://www.trfinc.org)  
(chapters in numerous states)

**New York Horse Rescue Corp.**  
631-874-9420  
[www.nyhr.org](http://www.nyhr.org)

**H.O.R.S.E. Rescue & Sanctuary**  
585-584-8210  
[www.hrsny.org](http://www.hrsny.org)

### OHIO

**CANTER Ohio**  
614-266-3975  
[www.canterusa.org/ohio](http://www.canterusa.org/ohio)

**New Vocations**  
937-947-4020  
[www.horseadoption.com](http://www.horseadoption.com)

### PENNSYLVANIA

**Appalachian Horse Help & Rescue**  
570-322-3260  
[www.ahhr911.iwarp.com](http://www.ahhr911.iwarp.com)

**Bright Futures Farm**  
814-827-8270  
[www.brightfuturesfarm.org](http://www.brightfuturesfarm.org)

**CANTER Pennsylvania**  
717-385-0169  
[www.canterusa.org/pennsylvania](http://www.canterusa.org/pennsylvania)

**Ryerss Farm for Aged Equines**  
610-469-0533  
[www.ryerssfarm.org](http://www.ryerssfarm.org)

**Turning for Home**  
215-638-2012  
[www.patha.org/turning-for-home.html](http://www.patha.org/turning-for-home.html)

### TEXAS

**Habitat for Horses, Inc.**  
866-434-5737  
[www.habitatforhorses.org](http://www.habitatforhorses.org)

**LOPE Texas**  
512-565-1824  
[www.lopetx.org](http://www.lopetx.org)

### VIRGINIA

**Roanoke Valley Horse Rescue**  
540-721-1910  
[www.rvhr.com](http://www.rvhr.com)

### WASHINGTON

**Second Chance Ranch**  
360-861-8056  
[www.secondchanceranch.org](http://www.secondchanceranch.org)

### ONTARIO

**LongRun Thoroughbred Retirement Society**  
[www.longrunretirement.com](http://www.longrunretirement.com)



# Worlds Apart

BY JACQUELINE DUKE

**E***quus ferus caballus*. Domestic horse. Sport animal. Livestock. Pet. Food source. The modern horse can mean different things in different cultures, and horses often can have more than one purpose, depending on the customs of the country. While the horse is a revered cultural icon in the United States, mythicized for its role in helping win the West, other countries take a more practical view. They might enjoy horses for sport and then savor them for dinner or export their meat for consumption elsewhere.

## A global view of equine slaughter: from taboo to table

Some horse racing countries permit slaughter and also promote programs to help retired racehorses. But not all of those countries eat horse meat.

"In the Anglo-Saxon world it's taboo," said Newmarket, England-based veterinarian Dr. Frederic E. Barrelet. "In the English-speaking world it's worse than cannibalism."

Eugenio Colombo, an Italian-born U.S.-based bloodstock agent, takes a completely different view: "To me, not eating horse meat is just fanaticism."

Few countries are as polarized on the issue of horse slaughter as the U.S., where animal welfare advocates helped close processing plants in 2007. But the horse slaughter issue is also a touchy subject in some other horse racing countries around the world.

Here is an overview:

Since the closing of U.S. plants, export of American horses to **Canada** and Mexico for slaughter has increased. Canada has four operating rendering plants, or abattoirs, where nearly 94,000 horses were killed in 2009. Undercover video footage of the slaughter process in one of the plants went viral earlier this year, causing widespread outrage and leading to introduction of legislation in Parliament that would ban horse slaughter and the export of horse meat. The Canadian Horse Defence Coalition supports the legislation and is encouraging petition drives throughout the commonwealth.

"We're seeing very cruel means of slaughter here, and it's quite unacceptable," said the coalition's Shelley Grainger.

Meanwhile, seeking to comply with European Commission requirements on the exportation of horse meat, Canada now mandates that slaughter facilities have complete health and identity records for each horse. The gist of the regulations is to prevent human consumption of horse meat

from animals that received medications and substances such as phenylbutazone and anabolic steroids. Horses without the proper paperwork must go through a six-month "drying out" period before they can go to the slaughter plants.

The regulations, which went into effect July 31, have created confusion at auction markets, where sales have been down. It's unclear whether the regulations will have a long-term impact on the number of slaughter-bound horses, including those from the U. S.



Horses awaiting sale at Ontario's main livestock auction

COURTESY CANADIAN HORSE DEFENCE COALITION/SHELLEY GRAINGER

While slaughter debate rages, LongRun, one of the industry's first adoption and placement programs for Thoroughbreds, continues its efforts as do other retirement programs in Canada.

**England** has a well-established program for retraining and "rehoming" ex-racehorses. Funded by the racing industry and by endowments, Retraining of Racehorses helps support four equine sanctuaries. The organization also aggressively promotes ex-racehorses for second careers. Di Arbuthnot, ROR's director of operations, said some 5,000 ex-racehorses have gone on to new jobs, from eventing and show jumping to horse ball and polo cross. England's deep equestrian traditions have helped the

effort, she said. "We've always used racehorses, and Thoroughbreds have always been popular."

At the same time, England permits horse slaughter and has at least two abattoirs where equines meet their end. The organization Animal Aid estimates that as many as 2,000 ex-racehorses are slaughtered in England every year to supply other countries with horse meat, but some dispute that number. According to Arbuthnot, the prevailing attitude toward slaughter is that it is a better alternative to a life of suffering. "That's the kindest thing," she said.

In **France**, horses are sport and food, though the taste for *viande chevaline* seems to be waning. Consumption of horse meat has fallen steadily over the past two decades and by 12% since 2007. It's hard to say whether a growing anti-slaughter movement has had an impact, but horse meat now represents less than 1% of all meat consumed in the country.

In recent years the plight of ex-racehorses has found resonance with the French racing industry, which now supports a program, the Ligue Pour la Protection du Cheval, with a small percentage of purse money.

France Galop also subsidizes and helps administer the program, which rehabilitates and retrains ex-racehorses.

Horses with injuries too severe to live pain-free are euthanized, and no horses sent into the retirement program are ever sent to slaughter.

In **Australia**, approximately 40,000 horses are slaughtered each year for pet food and for export to horse meat-eating countries. The domestic sale of horse meat for human consumption is banned.


It's not known how many racehorses make up the 40,000, but many Australians have a pragmatic view about slaughter.

"It's not the hysteria about horse destruction in our part of the world," said bloodstock agent Vin Cox. "While it's not

ideal, it's a better alternative than having unwanted horses all around the countryside that aren't cared for and basically having a slow death."

Like England, Australia has a strong equestrian tradition, and some ex-racehorses end up with useful second careers.

In **Japan** it's no secret that many racehorses are slaughtered at the end of their careers. As many as 75% of racehorses meet that end, particularly those that have had ordinary careers and have little or no residual value. Japan is a larger consumer of horse meat.

"There's a limited demand for riding horses," said Masa Otani, a Japanese owner and breeder. 





# Giving Back

BY ESTHER MARR

**W**hen Primerica arrived at Summer Wind Farm two years ago following a long and strenuous career, he was worn down, his body riddled with aches and pains. But today the gelding is enjoying the good life, grazing his days away in a lush paddock, thanks to prominent breeder/owner Jane Lyon and her daughter, Karen Bailey.

Being involved in the Thoroughbred business has always meant much more than just making money to Bailey and Lyon.

Lyon's husband, Frank, bought Summer Wind for his wife in 1998 because, "I had always dreamed of raising horses in the Bluegrass," Jane Lyon said. Bailey serves as the broodmare manager of the commercial breeding operation near Georgetown, Ky., and since the farm's inception the mother-daughter team has sought out and brought home a half-dozen Thoroughbreds connected to Summer Wind.

In addition to finding and rehabilitating these Thoroughbreds, Lyon and Bailey

two stakes winners, Primerica was grade 1-placed and earned nearly \$400,000 during his career but fell off the radar during his sixth season of racing in 2007 as he ran for lower and lower claiming prices.

In his last start Primerica was ninth, beaten 10 lengths in a \$13,000 claiming contest at Hollywood Park as a 9-year-old, and Lyon decided it was time to bring the old boy home.

"He came up in my virtual stable, and I realized he was getting pretty old and was in pretty bad circumstances, so I bought him back," said Lyon, who splits her time each year between homes in Hot Springs,

Home: A Thoroughbred's Second Chance, tells the story of Skipingo—a half brother to champion Skip Away—who was the initial horse Lyon and Bailey brought back to Summer Wind after his dismal racing career. Even though Skipingo failed to live up to the talents of his famous sibling on the racetrack, he was rehabilitated to become a champion show horse.

"Skipingo is the one that started the whole thing. His mom (Ingot Way) was my favorite mare, and we always kept up with him, but then in 2003 we suddenly lost track of him," said Bailey, who delivered Skipingo, raised him, and prepped him as a yearling. "Then I found him at the 2004 Keeneland January horses of all ages sale, and I just started crying. I knew at that point I had to bring him home." Bailey bought the horse for \$4,500. Some of the other Thoroughbreds that Lyon and Bailey have tracked down and rescued from troubled situations include Mr. Antagonizer, Forest Danz, and Silver Vista.

Silver Vista suffered from kidney cancer, but Lyon and Bailey helped nurse the son of Silver Deputy back to health. "He'll be the subject of my third book, if I ever get around to it," said Lyon, who said she feels a responsibility for the horses Summer Wind has raised, regardless of where they end up.


"While the Thoroughbred industry is definitely a business for us, horses are flesh and blood and are living beings; they're not disposable," said Lyon. "I feel a responsibility... obviously, I can't get every one of them back that don't do well (in their careers), but the ones that do present themselves that I can get, I try to."

Bailey, who started riding hunter-jumpers at age 11, also runs a wildlife center in her spare time.

"To be a responsible member of any business, you have to be willing to give back—to be responsible for what you produce," said Bailey. "As breeders, we're just creating a problem if we don't look at what happens down the line. You have to be part of the answer."

Book proceeds benefit several different Thoroughbred rescue organizations, Lyon said. The primary recipient of *Skipingo Home* is Old Friends, a retirement home for Thoroughbreds near Georgetown.

Lyon and Bailey do not receive profits from their book projects.

"We donate everything," said Bailey, who does the artistic layout for the books and helps with story outlines, while Lyon does most of the writing. "The response (to *Skipingo Home*) has been great—way more than we expected. It's a happy story, and if it makes one person adopt a retired racehorse or go find one of the horses they raised and make sure something good happened to them, then the book did everything it was supposed to do." 



Jane Lyon with Primerica and daughter Karen Bailey with Skipingo

ANNE M. EBERHARDT

have chronicled the stories of two of these horses in children's poetry books that benefit Thoroughbred rescue groups.

*Primerica: A Home for the Brave*, the most recent collaborative effort between Bailey and Lyon, is an account of Primerica's journey to Summer Wind from his racing days on the West Coast. The book will be published later this year.

"We did not raise (Primerica), but he's out of a mare we owned named Primedex," said Lyon of the gelding. A half brother to

Ark., and in Kentucky at Summer Wind.

Primerica "was in pretty bad shape when we got him, and he was already 10, so he became what I call a 'yard ornament,'" said Lyon.

"We've had some (horses) come to us that were thin and in bad shape and had leg or foot problems...but to see them months later when they're shiny and happy and out in a big pasture, that's the most rewarding thing."

Lyon and Bailey's first book, *Skipingo*



# The One That Got Away

BY JENNIFER HOYT

**T**rainer Michele Boyce has a way of finding success with horses no one else wants. This past summer she collected three wins and a third at Arlington Park with horses considered “rescue projects.” She is actively involved in Thoroughbred retirement efforts and has earned a reputation of doing right by her horses. She tracks past runners, either sold or lost through claims, with electronic stable mail, a service that sends an e-mail alert whenever a horse is entered in a race or works out. Her horses rarely fall through the cracks, but one did.

Salty Sailor wasn’t a stakes winner, but he was a useful horse. He made 37 starts over six years for Boyce, who owned him in partnership with Cherrywood Racing Stables, and he won five times. Boyce developed a special attachment to Salty Sailor after picking him out at the 2001 Keeneland September yearling sale. He was a bargain at \$8,000 because a knee injury he had suffered as a weanling kept most buyers away.

“People were ignoring him because of the knee injury, but I had always had good luck with Salt Lakes, and I liked everything else about him,” said Boyce. “The injury was above the knee, so I decided to take a chance. He turned out to be a very

nice horse, and I grew quite fond of him.”

Salty Sailor, a Kentucky-bred out of the Alysheba mare Holly North, won his career debut in December 2002 at Hawthorne Race Course, but he suffered the first of several injuries that plagued his career and did not start again until October 2003. True to form, Boyce would give the Salt Lake gelding the time he needed, and throughout his career his layoffs ranged from four to 11 months. Following one of those long layoffs, Salty Sailor returned to the races in March 2008 at the lowest level of his career, an \$8,000 claiming race at Hawthorne, and left the track as the property of new owner-trainer Michael Reavis.

Boyce, whose stable mostly comprises

claiming and allowance horses, knew the risk she was taking by entering Salty Sailor in such a race but was still upset to see him go. Following a win for Reavis at the \$4,000 level in Chicago, Salty Sailor was transferred to the barn of trainer J. Edwin Shilling at Mountaineer Racetrack in West Virginia. He won his first two races for Shilling before things went south. In June 2008, he finished fifth; in July he finished sixth and last by 13 lengths; and in August he finished last by 26¼ lengths in his final start. Boyce had been monitoring the horse through stable mail and had become concerned enough that she began trying to reach Shilling about getting the horse back.

After several unsuccessful attempts to reach Shilling, Boyce enlisted the help of Gail Vacca, president of the Illinois Equine Humane Center, and for five straight weeks they had people search the Sugarcreek Livestock Auction in Sugarcreek, Ohio, for the horse. Sugarcreek, which is less than two hours from Mountaineer, is often the last stop many Thoroughbreds make before being purchased and taken to Canada for slaughter. Boyce never could find Salty Sailor; as far as she was concerned, her horse had just disappeared.

Boyce may not have been able to help Salty Sailor, but she is determined to help other horses. She and her partner, Nate Ruffolo, the chairman of the Illinois Horseman Association’s Equine Welfare Committee, are actively involved with the Illinois Equine Humane Center, launched by horsemen and tracks in June 2010 to provide care for Illinois horses after they have finished racing.

“Salty Sailor is now my incentive to do what I can to save the ones still out there,” said Boyce. “A lot of times you just need to give a horse time, but some people act more like day traders than horsemen. That’s not what this game’s about.”

For his part, trainer Shilling said he could not recall the horse. “I’ve had a lot of horses in my barn since then,” he said.

Salty Sailor’s story is not unique. Anna Ford, program director for New Vocations, a racehorse adoption program, says her organization gets a call nearly every day from someone looking for a horse they have lost track of. Kim Zito, a noted horsewoman and wife of Hall of Fame trainer Nick Zito, began placing stickers on all their horses’ foal papers alerting horsemen that these horses have homes when their racing careers are over. She now even offers to pay to get a horse back, but rarely gets a call.

“Despite all of our best efforts, we get very few calls, unfortunately,” said Zito, “You’re always wondering.” 🐾



FOUR FOOTED PHOTOS

Salty Sailor won five of 37 starts for Michele Boyce (inset)



# Slaughter Is a Dirty Word

BY BARBARA LUNA

The American Association of Equine Practitioners was first to call them “unwanted horses” in 2005. Three years later U.S. slaughter plants were closed with no plans or funding in place to deal with the consequences. Rather than cut the number of horses slaughtered annually, the closures forced dealers to move their stock across the borders to either Canada or Mexico, making the final trip for these animals even more grueling and inhumane than before.

The backward order of things has caused well-intentioned or uneducated owners to allow thousands of unwanted horses to languish in fields or be handed around until horse traders score their \$100 to pick them up, sell them at auction, and lengthen their sad days on this earth until their trip over the border to eventual slaughter.

Slaughtering horses not only removes the injured, old, or unmanageable but also kills many that are useable, sound, well-schooled, and, yes, “unwanted.” One only has to read the testimonials from rescue organization websites that chronicle the success stories of horses that had been tossed aside when no longer useful or affordable and then rehabilitated or placed

into new careers. “Slightly used” is better than unwanted.

To most of those in the racing industry, “slaughter” is a dirty word. On both an emotional level and a business level, there is no place for slaughter in our industry.

While it is hard to stomach viewing the YouTube sneak-videos of slaughter plants and to picture any horse passing through the stocks to meet his end in such an inhumane manner, 7,000 racehorses met their demise under such conditions last year.

Acknowledged as much for their strong work ethic as they are for their hearts and personalities, racehorses are never simply livestock to the people who work with them daily, but are companions, partners,



and, at the very least, individuals with their own quirks and attitudes.

Business-wise, the negative publicity surrounding slaughter from animal activists and humanitarians outside of racing has accounted for a drop in interest in what was once truly the Sport of Kings.

The throwaway nature of our society regularly tosses unwanted items into the garbage. Unfortunately, racehorses often fall into the unwanted category when they stop being productive on the track. Reality steps in, and our business sense tells us to cut our losses, even when it means closing our eyes to the fate of an animal with which we once shared a winner's circle photo or a donut or a bag of peppermints.

In May 2008, the Pennsylvania Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association of Philadelphia Park—now Parx Racing—came up with a program at the same time it took a stand against slaughter. By issuing a zero-tolerance policy, horsemen were warned that any trainer or owner found to be responsible for a horse ending up in a kill pen, livestock auction, or at slaughter would lose his license. Funded by the PTHA, the horsemen, and the racetrack, “Turning For Home” has established a plan that negates the need for slaughter through rehabilitation and adoption and through humane euthanasia when necessary.

Sadly, with a poor economy and the expense of owning farmland, it is unrealistic

## Progress in Resolving the Unwanted Horse Issue

BY TOM R. LENZ, DVM, MS, DACT

Closure of U.S. equine slaughter facilities in 2007, along with the current economic recession, has contributed to a sharp increase in the number of unwanted horses throughout the country, with estimates totaling approximately 100,000 horses per year. That figure is based on the number of horses sent to meat-processing plants in Mexico and Canada over the last few years, as they represent the lowest economic level of the horse population and typify the unwanted horse.

Unadoptable feral horses are also considered unwanted, and nearly 30,000 are currently kept in Bureau of Land Management-funded long-term sanctuaries and in the BLM's adoption pipeline. What is not known is how many horses are annually abandoned, neglected, or abused.

As defined by the American Association of Equine Practitioners in 2005, unwanted horses are those no longer wanted by their current owner because they are

old, injured, sick, unmanageable, or fail to meet their owner's expectations. An Unwanted Horse Coalition website survey resulting in more than 23,000 respondents found that the unwanted horse most likely to be sold is a show or competition horse, usually a Quarter Horse, Paint, or Thoroughbred, that did not meet its owner's expectations because it was too slow, not athletic enough, or unattractive. Most were between the ages of 3 and 10 years,



with mares and geldings equally represented. The unwanted horse most likely to be donated to a rescue/ retraining facility or sanctuary is a racehorse, primarily Thoroughbred or Quarter Horse, that did not meet its owner's expectations. Most are geldings (63%) and between 6 and 20 years of age. The unwanted horse that is most likely euthanized is a recreational horse that has a terminal illness or injury, primarily Quarter Horse, Thoroughbred, or Arabian between the ages of 10 and 21.

It is interesting that 69% of the rescue organizations that responded to the survey were at or near capacity, with an average maximum occupancy rate of 42 horses per facility. Based on the American Horse Defense Fund's list of 432 rescue facilities nationwide, it is easy to estimate that roughly 18,000 horses could be placed in rescue/ retirement facilities yearly. The survey indicated that nearly as many horses stay at facilities for life as are adopted out and so additional options for these horses must be developed.

Current options are retraining; a change in occupation; donation to a rescue/retirement facility, therapeutic riding program, university teaching/ research institution, or police force; euthanasia at the owner's request; or euthanasia at a processing



to believe that every horse can live out its life as a pasture ornament.


Horses that have been diagnosed by at least two veterinarians as having permanent and severe or degenerative joint damage, with severe fractures that won't respond to surgery, and with other injuries that will prevent a horse from ever going on to any type of second career, can be candidates for euthanasia.

Unfortunately, euthanasia is much more costly than sending a horse to slaughter. The veterinary call fee, price of euthanasia drugs, and carcass removal can range in price from \$350 to \$650. Euthanasia "clin-

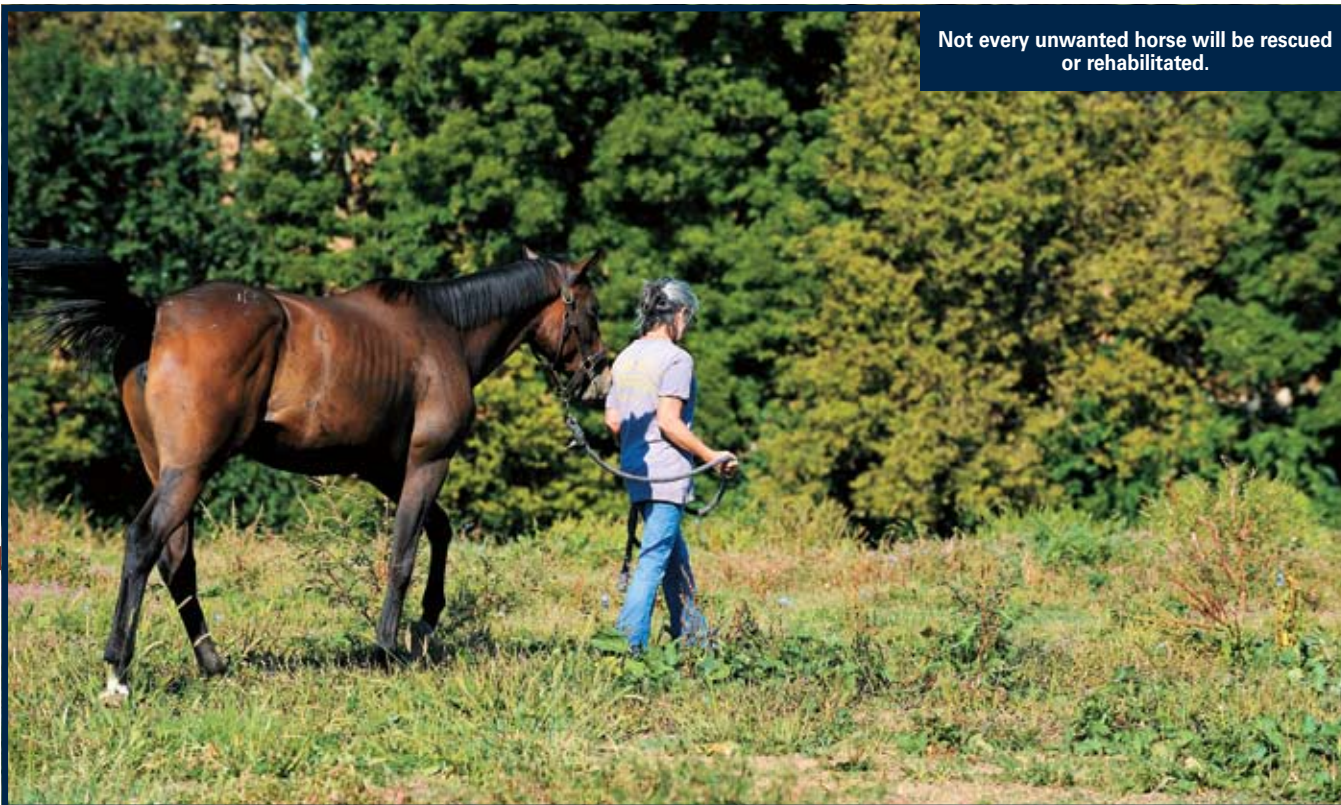
ics" are now scheduled by some retirement programs and can offer lower prices as well as a respectful death for horses when there is no alternative.

Turning For Home's business plan has been met with enthusiasm at other tracks that are trying to put similar programs in place. However, the "unwanted horse" problem must also be countered by cutting down on injuries and irresponsible breeding, along with continued research and work on a national level to insure the safety of track surfaces and the safety of the racehorse through better medication rules and trainer licensing. More horses

will retire sound and be able to go on to new careers.

Changing society's outlook toward the old, broken, or unwanted seems an insurmountable task, but, like Turning For Home's tagline, perhaps the entire racing industry can be encouraged to "take care of its own," so that the word "slaughter" can be removed from its vocabulary, too. 

*Barbara Luna is the program administrator for the Pennsylvania Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association "Turning For Home" Parx Racing Racehorse Retirement program.*



**Not every unwanted horse will be rescued or rehabilitated.**

ANNE M. EBERHARDT


plant. Recent reports on the number of horses exported to Canada and Mexico for slaughter have indicated that 20,000 fewer horses were exported in 2009 compared to 2008, which may indicate a decrease in the number of unwanted horses in the United States or an increase in responsible ownership. Breeding and registration reports by the major equine breeds indicate the number of mares bred has decreased roughly 15% per year over the last few years, driven primarily by the recession and decreased demand. However, that decrease would not account for the reduced number of horses being exported to foreign meat-processing plants.

It appears the efforts of a number of organizations within the horse industry that have worked diligently to raise awareness of the issue and to offer solutions are starting to pay off. The AAEP has developed a booklet titled "Care Guidelines for Equine Rescue and Retirement Facilities" that will

aid current rescue/retraining/retirement facilities as well as those being started to care for unwanted horses. The Jockey Club is once again offering Thoroughbred owners and breeders the opportunity to contribute, through a voluntary check-off program, to aftercare programs at the time they register their foals. The program raises funds to assist the retirement, retraining, and adoption efforts of the Thoroughbred Charities of America and the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundations. The Jockey Club donated \$100,000 to these two charities in 2009 and will make the same donation in 2010. The American Quarter Horse Association's Full Circle Program provides owners/breeders/members the opportunity to enroll a horse in the program at the time they register the horse. Should the horse ever become unwanted or ready to retire, they will be contacted and provided the opportunity to take the horse back, recommend a retirement home, or provide

funding to support the horse.

The Unwanted Horse Coalition continues to lead the way in raising awareness of the plight of the unwanted horse and organizing its membership organizations in developing solutions. The coalition has focused on providing educational materials, speakers, news summaries, and programs, which can be found at [www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org](http://www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org).

We'll never completely eliminate the unwanted horse problem because we cannot prevent horses from aging, developing career-ending injuries, being poor athletes, or being unattractive, but we can minimize the problem by buying rather than breeding, adopting rather than buying, finding alternative careers, and euthanizing rather than discarding. 

*Tom R. Lenz is former chairman of the Unwanted Horse Coalition and past president of the AAEP.*

## A Horse For My Kingdom

**C**hilled by the Cold War, American poet Edwin Muir imagined the end of the world. In his apocalyptic vision, described in a poem titled “The Horses,” the modern world has been destroyed, survivors left in devastation and desperation. Without communications, electricity, gasoline, governments—all the comforts that provide ease and order in human lives—man is lost. Until the evening when the strange horses come. Strange, because modern society has forgotten its long history and necessary relationship with the horse. But the horses wait until society remembers.

The message of Muir’s poem, surprisingly, is not about war. War is simply the messenger that reminds us of an elemental fact: Human beings need horses. Didn’t Shakespeare himself remark on this more than 400 years ago when Richard III cries, “A horse! My kingdom for a horse!”



**Susan Hayden Kennedy**  
volunteers at Remember Me  
Racehorse Rescue in  
Burleson, Texas

### ***The horse's sociability and intelligence, strong back, and speed are all gifts to humans***

For thousands of years, the lives of human beings and horses have been allied in cooperation and servitude. The earliest recognized domestication began 5,000 years ago, as the free-running equine herds on the Eurasian steppes ignited the imagination of human beings. Wild horses, like other animals, had been supplying many of life’s necessities—milk, meat, hides, dung. But 5,000 years ago a human being looked upon the horse in a new way. The horse’s sociability and intelligence,

his strong back and powerful hind-quarters, and his speed were gifts as well. With this recognition, the domestication of the horse began, an alliance that altered the course of human life.

The earliest domesticated horses carried possessions and pulled sleds of untotable objects, a development that allowed human society a new mobility. Greeks and Romans harnessed the horse for use as a draft animal. Ancient Persians trained the horse for the hunt and organized races. And in the creation of the cavalry—armed soldiers

on horseback—early societies found advantage against foot soldiers in battle. Through World War II, societies in conflict continued to employ horses to pull artillery, deliver missives, and transport the dead and wounded.


The industrial age knew the horse’s gifts as well. Human endeavors in agriculture, industry, and commerce are beholden to the cooperative spirit, adaptability, and physical strength of the horse. He plowed fields and pulled farming machines. He moved goods and materials; provided convenient, efficient, and inexpensive power; pulled passengers, freight, and lumber. In cities the horse transported food, medicine, and mail; drew trade carts, coaches, and fire equipment. And in sport, the horse enriched our leisure time with racing; eventing, jumping, and dressage; polo; rodeo; and pleasure riding.

As Americans we’ve founded our own particular history with the horse. While the Spanish conquistadores get credit for reintroducing the horse to the Americas, the native American peoples adopted the horse as their own. Horses were vital to their sacred buffalo hunts and greatly eased the hardships of a nomadic lifestyle. Anglo-Americans relied on the horse for transportation, exploration, and migration. The drive across the U.S., from east to west, was led by horses. Those iconic images of the American West, the cowboy and his trusted horse at home on the lonesome range, have been immortalized on canvases by Frederic Remington and Charles Russell and become our mythology.

This versatile mix of use, ease, companionship, and sport has not been duplicated with any other animal.

In the microcosm of Muir’s poem, as the survivors struggle, the horses “waited./Stubborn and shy, as if they had been sent/By an old command to find our whereabouts/And that long-lost archaic companionship.” The desperate survivors re-discover their relationship with the horse, and life begins anew as horses once again “pull our plows and bear our loads./Our life is changed; their coming is our beginning.”

Today, at rescue operations around the United States, healthy, willing horses wait still. They are beautiful to look at and strong. Their clipped bay and chestnut coats glisten in the sunlight. Their muscles ripple under taut flesh. Their manes and tails, untangled and soft, are stirred by breezes. Their heads are high; their ears, alert. If you listen, you can hear them ask: What happens next? I’m awaiting my assignment.

Their care is a debt we owe. Right now, it is our turn to save them. 

*The Blood-Horse seeks diverse viewpoints for the Final Turn. Submissions should be a maximum of 750 words and directed to [editorial@bloodhorse.com](mailto:editorial@bloodhorse.com)*