

TRANSFERRING HORSE OWNERSHIP: ENSURING FUTURE CARE



It is typical of a horse's life that he or she will change hands several times.

When a horse is transferred from one owner to another there is a moral obligation to the horse by both parties.

The current owner's responsibility to a horse is not done until the horse is safely in a proper home receiving care and humane treatment.

The new owner is assuming responsibility for care and treatment for the long term and must be prepared for all that entails and ready to meet that responsibility.

UNPREPARED OWNERS

Escalating costs of hay and feed coupled with a downturn in the economy means more owners looking to rehome their horses when they can no longer afford them. This leads to fewer homes for a larger number of horses. To say that is the only reason for the large number of homeless horses would be naïve. A contributing factor is while suitable homes are harder to find over breeding continues. Over breeding causes an excess number of horses depressing the price to purchase a horse while at the same time cost of ownership is going up.

When it cost \$1500 or more to have a chance of buying a horse it made a more realistic approach to the cost of ownership. Now you can easily find horses for sale in the \$200 - \$500 range in most markets and "free to good home" is not uncommon. These are people who can no longer care for a horse and want the best for him, yet are unknowingly making the problem of finding a good home worse.

Yet, there are many people with good intentions who would love to have a horse. However, when presented the opportunity to own a horse for free or for such low amounts they think this means they can afford one. Many do not understand that the annual care may well be 3x what they pay for the horse. Compounding the situation, they purchase or take ownership of the horse before even setting up a stable or shelter for him, with no previous experience with equines and awareness of their needs.

RESPONSIBILITY

It does no good to chastise horse owners who got in over their heads after the fact.

TRANSFERRING HORSE OWNERSHIP: ENSURING FUTURE CARE

Experiencing financial difficulties can and does happen and cannot always be avoided.

Telling somebody who can no longer afford to care for their horse that they should never give their horse away or sell him to a new owner “too cheap”, or at a livestock auction where predatory buyers lurk acting as middlemen for horse flesh, comes across as not helpful. If equine rescues have no room, these owners may end up trying to hold onto their horses hoping for the best and end up neglecting their care, or perhaps even abandoning them.

Still, the obligation of the responsible owner is not to see the horse get into a trailer and be driven away but rather to know he is being taken to a good home.

CREATIVE ANSWERS

There are new approaches to rehoming a horse to a safe environment that have merit.

One example we saw of was a “seller” who gave the horse for free upon verifying a \$500 prepaid veterinarian and \$250 prepaid farrier for that specific horse. This ensured the new owner would receive qualified guidance and provide basic needed care for the horse for the first year at least. It also gave prospective owners a realistic look at some of the associated expenses. The horse was not “priced out of local market” (he was free), there is no way for a profit to be turned at an auction, and some level of care is ensured.

Gelding all colts and horses being sold or transferred as companion animals is another step. This is similar to what is done in rehoming other companion animals such as cats and dogs where a neutering is part of the adoption or rehoming process. It may help reduce back yard breeding by both the unknowing and the unscrupulous.

With new or first time owners arrangements can be made to allow them to access cost of care and long-term interest. Allow them to spend time with a horse and get to know him while they purchase items needed for his care. Refer them to a place like [Vale Horse Stables](#) and have them purchase an adequate shelter. Start and fund an account with a vet and farrier. Purchase a supply of high quality supplements like [Equiform Nutrition](#).

If potential new owners are willing and able to do this over the course of several months – it is a reasonable assurance they understand the expense of a horse and are committed and financially able to provide for him. Then letting go of the horse at very low cost or for free is not perpetuating the problem. It is educating prospective horse owners while ensuring to the best extent a potential good home for the horse.

* * * * *