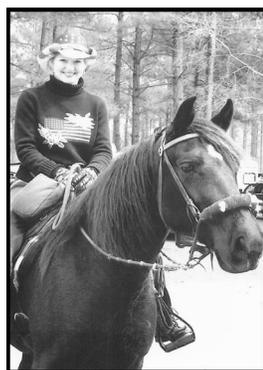


LET ME SAY THIS ... ABOUT THAT

By *Patty Livingston, President*



I feel like I carry my soapbox around with me most of the time. I am always eager to educate people concerning our country's horse problems. The reason I harp on it so much is that I am shocked at

the ignorance of people who continue to be responsible for the production of more horses in the face of such an obvious overabundance.

There are over 9.5 million horses in this country and that number is increasing by three hundred thousand every year. There are no firm statistics on how many horses have been abandoned in our state or nationally, however, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is overwhelmed with reports of neglected horses. In just two months, the SPCA has dispersed their stock of hay for the entire year to rescue organizations.

Because GERL supports law enforcement and the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Equine Division, we know firsthand what a problem Georgia is having with horses. Many law enforcement agencies are reaching out to equine rescues for help.

There aren't enough rescues in existence, including GERL, to fix the problems created by 30+ years of rampant, over production of horses! So many horses have fallen into the hands of irresponsible owners, they are suffering starvation and cruelty, and it is very frustrating to realize that the need for intervention

on their behalf cannot possibly be totally met. Please don't get me wrong, there's no better feeling in the world than driving home with two skinny horses on the trailer that have just been given a second chance at life.

The good news is that we CAN fix this problem. It's going to take some time and a lot of effort. I'd like to share with you a plan that I wrote a couple of years ago to get things turned around and moving in the right direction.

This "Get Well Plan" consists of five major parts. One does not work well without the other four. This Plan is not intended to simply rescue a few horses. We have been doing that for years and see no end to the real problem. This plan is designed to reduce the number of horses being produced, stop the cycle of neglect by making horse ownership out of reach for those who would not value them enough to provide at least adequate care, and to make equine owners who fail to provide adequate care, accountable.

Georgia's Get Well Plan:

- A. Slow down reproduction**
- B. Prosecute and Fine Abusers**
- C. Disbursement/Disposal**
- D. Financial**
- E. Education**

Details:

A. Slow down reproduction

◆ Promote Castration

- ✓ Create an annual "Stallion to Gelding" day in Georgia. Partner with University of Georgia (UGA) and the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) to invite numbers of Georgia equine veterinarians to participate in castration clinics all over the state, on the same day, at a greatly reduced price. Part of the cost of castrations at these events will be paid by Georgia Equine Rescue League. UGA vet students and pre-vet students will gain valuable experience as they participate under the supervision of their instructors or a licensed vet. Promote this event through all means available.
- ✓ Education: Introduce this program at horse shows and other equine events via information booths. Here, the public can be introduced to the concept of castration as a means to reduce the number of horses which will increase their value and eventually end the problems caused by over production. Use the GERL newsletter and website, the GDA Market Bulletin, and local newspapers to get the message out.
- ✓ Encourage law enforcement to crack down on abusive horse owners by imposing fines and using their influence to discourage irresponsible breeding practices, i.e. leaving stallions running loose with mares when the owners are unable to care for the offspring produced.

B. Prosecute and Fine

◆ Impose Fines

- ✓ Promote the enforcement of current equine abuse laws.
- ✓ Encourage GDA State Inspectors to reach out to local law enforcement to help enforce the current equine laws when there is no compliance from equine owners.
- ✓ Continue to host multi-county law enforcement meetings across Georgia to educate and train sheriff's deputies and animal control agents about our equine laws, how to gather evidence in a way that will insure successful prosecution of animal cruelty cases, basic horse handling and body scoring.

- ✓ Continue to promote and emulate the current process being followed by DeKalb County Animal Welfare and Sheriff's Department to obtain restitution and impose fines for animal abusers.
- ✓ Promote and encourage the prosecution of offenders and implement probation periods during and after which offenders would not be allowed to own horses.

C. Disbursement/Disposal

◆ Triage potential impoundment equine

- ✓ Aged equine or those too young to be rideable impounded by GDA should be sent to equine rescue organizations for care, training, and eventual placement. The reason for this is that the GDA Impoundment Program is not designed to provide long term care. It is designed to rehabilitate and re-home horses as soon as possible. Aged and non rideable horses very often bring no bids at GDA auction sales.
- ✓ Create a "revolving door" program. The cost of rehabilitating a starved horse should run approximately \$600 per horse for a three month period. Horses picked up by GDA or county animal control should remain in their care for a limited amount of time. This includes GERL picking up expenses for vaccinations and castrations. NOTE: The term "impoundment" does not necessarily mean that legal steps were performed in order to pick up a horse.

◆ Make horses more marketable

- ✓ Locate and utilize foster homes where young, green broke or untrained horses can receive appropriate training to ensure that they would be less likely to again end up in a rescue situation.
- ✓ Create a "Train the Trainer" program where local horse trainers are solicited to go to the prison impound(s) one day per month to teach the prisoners in the equine program how to train the impounded horses, making them more marketable. Also solicit local horse trainers to go to the non-prison impounds to work with the horses there. NOTE: this idea is currently on hold.
- ✓ Create a new program similar to "Road to the Horse" – Invite local horse trainers to participate in a weekend event where they demonstrate their abilities in a contest atmosphere, with an audience, to determine the best trainer using impounded, untrained horses.

D. Financial

◆ Grants

- ✓ There are many grants available from many different sources that would help pay for some of the programs offered by GERL to help horse owners. Look into what is available and apply.

◆ Donations

- ✓ Promote GERL and the Georgia Department of Agriculture's (GDA) Equine program to bring more visibility and perhaps secure more funding and donations.
- ✓ Request donations for hay during the summer months when hay is being cut.
- ✓ Request use of dry storage facilities where hay can be stored.
- ✓ Request donations for other needed items for horse care.

◆ Fundraisers

- ✓ Create a "Georgia Road to the Horse" weekend fundraiser with training demonstrations, publicity and examples of different equine breeds, etc., to give more visibility to the plight of horses today and to benefit the various programs being offered to horse owners.
- ✓ Other fundraising ideas should be discussed.

E. Education

◆ Educate the public on caring for equine

◆ Educate the public on the need for castration

- ✓ Sponsor information booths at all equine events to promote encouragement of castration and less breeding of equine.
- ✓ Use the State of Georgia's "Market Bulletin" to get the messages out.
- ✓ Consider using billboards (donated, if possible) to call attention to the problems caused by an overabundance of horses in our country

◆ Educate County Law Enforcement and Animal Control Agencies

- ✓ Encourage their involvement in equine abuse/neglect cases in their county.

GERL is already busy implementing many of the items listed in this plan. Our newsletters are full of announcements concerning low-cost castration clinics, availability of crisis intervention funds which temporarily help horse owners in need, educational and financial support for law enforcement and animal control agencies, and of course, all possible support for the Georgia Department of Agriculture, Equine Division. And, let me say this about that...this is a long-term plan that we hope other rescues and equine organizations will embrace as a path to make Georgia a shining example and Georgia's horses, the winners!