

# **Georgia's Equine Get Well Plan**

## **Foreword:**

This "Equine Get Well Plan" that is laid out in detail on the following page consists of five major categories that are specific to Georgia. It includes details about the Georgia Department of Agriculture equine regulatory program and its partnership with a non-profit organization that has existed for over 23 years for the sole purpose of raising funds to pay for the support of state impounded horses. The Plan also includes details specific to the two State prison equine impounds that exist as part of Georgia's equine program.

This Plan is intended as a model to other rescue organizations throughout the country that want to do more to resolve our horse problems. With more than 170,000 unwanted horses every year, it has become obvious that we are never going to be able to fix this program with rescue. These same five categories can be used by any organization. All that need be added is the detail behind each category that is specific to the organization/state creating it.

## **Introduction:**

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. It also addresses the problem of disposition of the unwanted, untrained horse, as well as the financial and educational needs.

## **Georgia's Get Well Plan:**

- A. Reduction of reproduction**
- B. Prosecution**
- C. Disposition**
- D. Financial**
- E. Education**

## **Details:**

### **A. Reduction of 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. Prosecution**

- **Prosecute and 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 law enforcement training 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. Disposition**

- **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.

**NOTE:** 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. 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!