

Recognizing a Legitimate Equine "RESCUE" *by Karla Sibert*

Rescue is a word that is used too often by certain groups of people who believe that merely saving a horse from the slaughterhouse constitutes a "rescue." Unfortunately, some of the "rescue organizations" that the Iowa Equine Rescue and Awareness League (IERAL) has come in contact with are folks who have collected too many horses from sale barns or private parties because those equines were going to kill.

In IERAL's experience, the type of person who refers to him/herself as "rescuer" usually means well to begin with. However, eventually, many of these "rescuers" fail to provide the rescued equines with proper food, water and care. Usually these rescuers accumulate many animals, not just equines. The current term for people like this is "hoarders." Because they continue to take in many different kinds of animals, not just equines, many hoarders soon find that they are in over their heads, financially, and do not have the means to be able to provide for these animals properly under Iowa Code 717. Most do not feel that they are doing wrong to the animals/equines. In part, this is because they believe that they've saved these animals from kill. Many times they believe they can rehabilitate these animals, and bring them back from an extremely malnourished state to a well nourished one, and then sell the horse for a better price than what they purchased them for at a sale barn or private owner. The latter rarely ever happens. Hoarding is a difficult area to address, and one which is coming more and more to the forefront when the law starts dealing with abused and neglected horses.

The AAEP's (American Association of Equine Practitioners) guide for equine rescues reads like this: "Those who take in every animal, regardless of their ability to provide care, or refusal to recognize when an animal is suffering, are hoarders, not rescuers."

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Only available water for 7 draft horses to drink!

Recognizing a Legitimate Equine Rescue and the Law

Neglect of Livestock Iowa Code 717:

A person who impounds or confines livestock, in any place, and does any of the following commits the offense of livestock neglect:

- Fails to provide livestock with care consistent with customary animal husbandry practices.
- Deprives livestock of necessary sustenance.
- Injures or destroys livestock by any means which causes pain or suffering in a manner inconsistent with customary animal husbandry practices.

Who should you call when you feel that equines are being neglected?

- 1. Law Enforcement** (You can do this anonymously if need be).
- 2. Veterinarian**
- 3. Local Humane Society/Animal Control**
- 4. IERAL Iowa Equine Rescue & Awareness League** (However, please know that our first call is to the local authorities to get them involved. This ensures that all of the correct steps are taken, and done properly, in case there would ever be a legal neglect case brought against the owners).

ALWAYS ask these questions...

- Check with the state and the IRS to see if that rescue is registered as a 501c3.
- How does that rescue obtain their livestock/equine?
- Do they have referrals from local authorities stating that they are a legitimate rescue?
- How do they provide for the rescued equines?
- What do they spend donated dollars on?
- How many equines do they adopt out annually?
- Are they certified in Equine Investigation?
- Always ask, "Do you take equines from their owners?" Their answer should be: "NO only law enforcement agencies can seize livestock or equines in Iowa."

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IERAL is a non-profit 501c3 approved equine rescue serving all of Iowa.

