

## **“Rescue;” (Continued from previous page)**

The Iowa Equine Rescue & Awareness League (IERAL) uses the word *rescue* in our name because Iowa Code 717 on neglect/abuse of livestock/equine refers to rescue, and we offer our services to all law enforcement agencies in all 99 Iowa counties. The equines that IERAL has obtained have been seized by law enforcement, and due to livestock/equine neglect/abuse. In Iowa, the **ONLY** agency that can remove livestock/equines from their owners are local law enforcement. In order to remove an equine from its owner, local law enforcement needs to have a written statement from a licensed veterinarian stating that, “in the veterinarian’s opinion, the livestock is neglected.”

IERAL has a non-profit veterinarian that assists law enforcement during neglect investigations. Many local veterinarians will **NOT** get involved because they personally know the equine owners and live within the same community. Some veterinarians are afraid that the owners may seek restitution or possibly harm the veterinarian’s personal animals in retaliation. Therefore, they do not want to go to court and testify on behalf of the county. There is always the question, as well, of who will pay them for their services during an investigation and civil hearing. In order to facilitate investigations and ensure they are done correctly, IERAL has become certified in equine investigation. We are not aware of any law enforcement agency or other equine rescues in the state of Iowa who offer this certification.

So, what sets IERAL apart from other equine/livestock “rescues,” and what should you do when you feel livestock or equines are being neglected? Or what if you want to donate to an Equine Rescue like IERAL? What are some basic things you should know and do to make sure that you are giving your money or concerns to a legitimate equine rescue?

### **Ask these questions:**

1. Check with the state and the IRS to see if that rescue is registered as a 501c3.
2. How does that rescue obtain their livestock/equine?
3. Do they have referrals from local authorities stating that they are a legitimate rescue?
4. How do they provide for the rescued equines after receiving them?
5. What do they spend donated dollars on?
6. How many equines do they adopt out annually?
7. Are they certified in Equine Investigation?
- 8. And always ask this. “Do you take equines from their owners?”**  
Because the answer to that question should be No. Only law enforcement agencies can seize livestock or equines.

### **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 societies usually do not have the authority to enter onto private property. This depends on codes within the humane society’s city or county. Some humane societies may have employees who are sworn officers. You need to check with each individual humane society. However, in most of Iowa’s 99 counties it’s safe to say that the best agency to contact is local law enforcement.
4. Should you call IERAL when you feel equines are being neglected? You may do so. 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. IERAL will be put on record that the call came in, and what follow up action we have taken. We do respond to calls in so far as we are legally able. We assess the property for the availability of food and water, and check to see if any of the equines are in immediate danger. We take photos, so they can be shared with law enforcement.

Please feel free to contact IERAL if you have any further questions or concerns, or visit our website: **[www.iaeral.org](http://www.iaeral.org)**