

# Reflection on Equine Rescue in Iowa over the past five years...

by Karla Sibert, IERAL

The Iowa Equine Rescue & Awareness League was established in 2005 and became a nonprofit 501c3 in 2006. Since the conception of the organization, we have rescued, or have assisted with the rescue, of 724 horses throughout 64 counties in Iowa. We continue to build relationships with nonprofit animal welfare groups, law enforcement agencies, veterinarians, and equine organizations throughout Iowa.

But the sad fact is, equine rescue in Iowa is not going anywhere, any time soon.

Here are a few of the horses that IERAL has helped throughout the years.

## Grulla Stallion, located in Jones County Iowa.



This horse was chained to a tree on the side of the road (2006) for three years plus (top photo). This horse had a history of neglect, and Jones County was unsuccessful in charging the owner, until this past year. I wrote about this horse in *Apples n Oats* a few

years back, stating that "tethering in Iowa is not against the law." Not offering food and water is a crime, however. The Jones County Sheriff's department had received countless calls (approximately ten a month) on this horse for three years, which cost the Tax Payers of Jones County approximately three thousands dollars for follow up on these calls. (This is a conservative number). But in 2009, on one of these follow-up calls, a well-respected Veterinarian, Dr. Beecher, would accompany the officers. Dr. Beecher would go on to testify on behalf of the county and horse. As a result, the judge ruled in favor of the horse in 2009, on the criminal charges of equine/livestock neglect/abuse.

The civil judge ruled that the horse would be put up for public auction to give the owner the chance to purchase him back. The Iowa Law 717, does state that the livestock "may" be put up for auction to pay back the debt of the rescue of the horse. With all the rescues that IERAL has been involved in over these past years, we've asked that the horse(s) be given to the county and then the county would turn them over to IERAL for adoptions and finding forever homes. IERAL returns any adoption fees back to the county, as the law states.

So, working with Jones County Attorney's office, IERAL agreed to take the horse to Kalona Sale Barn in early January, 2010. The past owner was indeed there at the sale barn that day, and made a fool of himself, yet once again. We were forced to lead the horse into the auction arena because he was still a stallion, and we had to handle him. The owner stood up and started shouting that we stole his horse, blah blah blah. This was not true, and we had court documents stating what was to take place on that day.

The horse was then sold for \$250.00. The purchaser donated the horse back to IERAL. We immediately took him in for gelding. Today, he is a handsome horse that would make a wonderful riding horse for someone (bottom left photo).

## Bay Mare, came to IERAL in January 2007 from Boone County Animal Control.

"Mae" was blind in both eyes (top right photo), one of which had to be removed immediately, to avoid euthanasia. She was one of nine horses removed that day, three of which ended up having to be put down. These horses died in the inexperienced hands of others whose desire it was to help, but who didn't have the knowledge to save horses in such deplorable condition.



We worked with Dr. Abraham, and he was gracious enough to remove the bay mare's eye for the same cost as euthanasia and disposal of the body.

Today, Mae is a thriving 12-year-old Standardbred mare, who continues to live her life with IERAL. She is a wonderful, SMART horse that is broke to ride (bottom photo). She does very well in familiar territory and doesn't resist too much to change. She is available for adoption to the right forever home!

## Most recently -January, 2010, the Standardbred Retirement Foundation,

based out of New Jersey, contacted IERAL to see if we could assist them on a removal of one of their own adopted horses in Charles City, IA. SRF told us that a veterinarian had just called them and shared that one of two adopted Standardbred horses there had died that day and the other needed to be removed as soon as possible. This was New Years Eve.

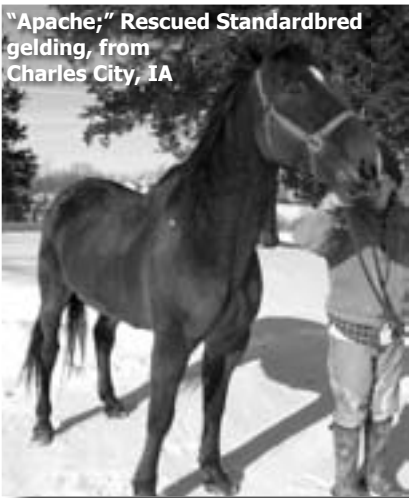
In horrible, icy cold weather, IERAL drove to Charles City and removed the horse as requested by SRF. "Apache" has started putting weight back on, and will be sent to Kentucky when he is able to travel.

Our success in adoptions of our horses has been excellent. However, with the increased intake of horses in 2009 to over 42 horses, adoptions have slowed down.

## ***Equine Rescue;***

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Generally, IERAL would rehabilitate 12-20 horses a year, and adoption ratios were 95%, prior to 2009. The intake doubled and adoption dropped off considerably. Driven by the poor economy, along with the drop in the horse market, we find IERAL outreaching to resources all over the USA. We continue to network with several equine rescues and hope to build relations with specific breed rescues, as well as others, to help find homes for our horses. Unfortunately, those rescues are in a similar situation as IERAL. We appreciate any



support we receive and have high hopes to continue with the rescue of equines in Iowa.

All IERAL rescued horses need to have further training and that is why our adoption fees are \$150 per horse. This allows you as a new owner to get the sort of training you and your horse need. All horses come with up-to-date vaccinations, and most have their feet trimmed as well. If the horse does not work out, IERAL refunds the adoption donation in full and we take the horse back without question.

If you would like to see other horses available for adoption, please visit [petfinder.com](http://petfinder.com) and reference zip code 52408 or [www.iaeral.org](http://www.iaeral.org)