

# Unwanted Horse Coalition

## Unwanted Horses: They Need Your Help

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History has shown that when the economy falls on hard times, animals are among the first to suffer. Numerous media reports suggest that the problem of unwanted horses is growing by the day. Some might even go so far as to say the horse community is in uncharted territory with the issue. People can argue about why the numbers are increasing, but the current state of the economy has left many horse owners in serious financial hardship, forcing them to make the decision to part with their horses. The bottom line is too many of these horses need a place to go.

Responsible owners are doing their best to find new homes and uses for their horses so that they don't become unwanted. The Unwanted Horse Coalition (UHC) has urged owners to surrender their horses to organizations that can use them, retrain them or give them a new home.

"These organizations take your horse when you have no other options, care for it, and work tirelessly to find it another life. Now the rescue facilities are starting to brim over their capacity and many of these organizations need your help," said Julia Andersen, director of the UHC.

While a donation of money, feed, hay, and other supplies is an urgent need for rescues, nothing can replace adoption. "If you are interested in taking in a horse, or in the market to buy one, why not check out the adoptable horses first? Horse owners and breeders are particularly well-suited to help with these horses," suggests Andersen.

"Many people are under the impression that the horses put up for adoption are old, lame, or physically undesirable. However the Unwanted Horse Coalition gets calls daily from people who have perfectly sound horses with a lot of life in them, but sadly the owners are not able to keep them for many different reasons. Certainly many are also older horses or horses that cannot be ridden. Both types are in need of homes," said Andersen.

The horse adoption process varies depending on the organization. Most require that you get to know the horse



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before you adopt it. This helps to ensure that you and your potential horse are suited for each other. "Frankly, this is a good idea even if it's not required by the organization," said Andersen. Another typical requirement is that the organization will conduct a

#### The Unwanted Horse Coalition

The mission of the Unwanted Horse Coalition is to reduce the number of unwanted horses and improve their welfare through education and the efforts of organizations committed to the health, safety and responsible care and disposition of these horses. The UHC grew out of the Unwanted Horse Summit, which was organized by the American Association of Equine Practitioners and held in conjunction with the American Horse Council's annual meeting in Washington, D.C., in April 2005. The summit was held to bring key stakeholders together to start a dialogue on the unwanted horse in America. Its purpose was to develop consensus on the most effective way to work together to address the issue. In June 2006, the UHC was folded into the AHC and now operates under its auspices.

home or barn visit to check up on the horse. Some organizations will even continue to visit you and your horse over time. This is a very responsible action by an organization, as they must make sure you are giving the horse proper nutrition, shelter, and care. Some organizations may even retain ownership for a period until they deem your care up to their health and safety standards. Finally, it is not uncommon for facilities to charge a small adoption fee. This fee helps to cover the expenses the facility incurred during the time the horse was at the facility.

If you are interested in adopting a horse and have never owned a horse before, there's much you need to know about horse care. Adopting a horse is not like adopting a dog or cat. Even if the adoption process is similar, caring for a horse is more time-consuming, more expensive, and requires a facility — either your own or a boarding farm. For more information on the many responsibilities of horse ownership, please see the UHC's "Own Responsibly" handbook, which can be downloaded from the UHC website, [www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org](http://www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org).

"If you are someone whose life had been enriched by horses, now is the time to ask what you can do for them in return," said Andersen. The UHC urges anyone able to adopt a horse to take action now and contact a local rescue facility. All of the rescues in the country do not have the capacity or means to take in all of the unwanted horses. UHC Chairman Dr. Tom Lenz advises people to buy rather than breed, adopt rather than buy, find alternative careers, and euthanize rather than discard. Again, these horses need your help. If you do not know of a rescue facility in your area, please visit [www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org](http://www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org) to see facility listings by state.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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