

# Unwanted Horse Coalition

Press Release

Contact: Julia Andersen, Director

Jandersen@horsecouncil.org

## Finding the right Facility:

*What you should ask before Adopting or Donating a Horse*

Making the decision to part with your horse is a difficult decision. While there are many reasons one can no longer keep their horse, most struggle to find the right home for them. As a responsible and concerned horse owner, you want to make sure your horse will be well-cared-for and happy in his future endeavors. If you happen to be in the lucky position to adopt a horse, you also have concerns regarding the facility you are adopting from, as well as the horse's history.

There are many options out there if you are adopting or donating a horse, but before you settle on one, you must know the right questions to ask any organization. It is YOUR responsibility to ask these questions.

First, make it a point to visit the facility and have a look around. What are the physical characteristics of the facility? Does the facility provide horses with ample room to move about and graze? Do the horses have easy access to suitable drinking water? What type of shelter is provided for the horses? Every facility will not be picture perfect, but having your horse's basic needs provided for in a safe environment is what matters. As you are looking around, write down any questions of possible concern.

You should know an organization's mission statement. See if they have a website and check it out. If so, how does the website compare with your first hand visit to the facility? How long has the facility been in operation? Do they have a Board of Directors? If so, who are they? Have any welfare charges been brought against the facility? You must know an organization's specific means and goals. Also, does the facility provide routine and emergency veterinary and dental care and farrier needs?

Not all facilities of a general type are the same. For example, if you choose to go to a horse rescue facility, some may only take Thoroughbred horses off the track, some may not accept horses that are "owner initiated surrenders," and some may be a horse sanctuary only. Make sure you understand what type of organization the facility is. If you know of a facility near you



## UNWANTED HORSE COALITION

and cannot donate or adopt a horse from them, it is still a good idea to ask them for helpful suggestions subject to your area if you need it. Additionally, some facilities have been known to make exceptions.



If the organization is an adoption facility, ask if they will try to place your horse into foster care. If the facility uses foster care, ask how the homes are screened. If the facility only adopts horses out, what are the requirements for adoption? Does the facility follow up with the new owners to ensure the horse is being properly cared for? What becomes of the horse when the adopter or the foster care giver no longer wants the horse? You may want to visit your horse from time to time. Ask if this is allowed and if they will let you know when your horse is transferred to a new owner. Also, there may come a time when you are

able to have a horse again. Find out what the organization's policy is on an original owner taking her horse back. If the facility cannot place your horse in a new home, will they euthanize the horse? If so, will you be notified beforehand?

Does the organization train/re-train their acquired horses and then sell for profit? While there is nothing wrong with this, it is something you should definitely know. Many organizations must sell a horse for profit after they put the time, money and energy into rehabilitating a horse. If they don't necessarily re-sell the horses, most organizations must charge a low adoption fee which covers the horse's basic care cost. It is also very important for you to ask if the facility has a policy against breeding, or do they restrict the horse's use in any way. What is the facility's post adoption policy on breeding and use? If it is an adoption facility, are stallions gelded upon entry and before adoption? Over-breeding horses for profit is not responsible ownership.

While it doesn't always matter if a facility is tax exempt, you should ask them for your own benefit. Is the organization an entity exempt for federal tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code? Does it file IRS Form 990 and forms required by the state? As for your horse's benefit, there are many great facilities that are not tax exempt, so you shouldn't overlook sending your horse there for that reason.

Finally, there are basic principles of horse care and management that apply to equine needs, regardless of the organization. Care can vary to some extent depending on specific factors such as region and climate. The American Association of Equine practitioners has laid out general guidelines for operating facilities called "Care Guidelines for Rescue and Retirement Facilities" prepared by the American Association of Equine Practitioners. These guidelines cover everything from Nutrition and basic hoof care to horse welfare and euthanasia. You can access this resource, as well as the Unwanted Horse Coalitions "Own responsibly" handbook by going to [www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org](http://www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org)

*Remember, knowing the facts is **your** full responsibility, before you donate or adopt a horse.*