

The Story is Simple...The Facts are Hard.....



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It's a farm road out in the middle of corn fields and pastures, you are not expecting to see horses standing in the road especially horses that look like these two. The poor old mare is just skin and bones and the gelding has a knot on his left front knee that is as big as a grapefruit. Who could these horses belong to and why are they here in the middle of no-where?

You make a phone call to the Livestock Board, give them a description of the horses and the condition they are in: an inspector promises to come take a look. Several days later you are on the same road, there they are again but this time the mare looks worse and the gelding is walking much slower. Again a phone call to the livestock board inspector who promised to take a look, he never saw them when he drove down the farm road. What can you do next, call the local horse rescue and see if they can help.

Our ranch began to get phone calls about the horses on Wednesday, September 8th and we made a drive by on the dirt road on Thursday September 9th. No sign of the horses, of course they could be anywhere, even hiding in the cornfields. Conversation with a very concern lady who lives in the area led to a promise of her calling the next time she spotted the horses near the dirt road.

Sunday afternoon, September 12th, the phone call comes in that the horses have been spotted on the dirt road. As luck would have it a truck and trailer are nearby and the poor skinny mare is caught and transported back to WNCR. The gelding even though he has a very bad knee, refuses to let anyone on foot near him so he has to be left behind.

Monday afternoon, September 13th, water is hauled out to the gelding and he is found in almost the exact spot he had been in when the mare was taken. Once again he would not have anyone on foot get near him, even if they were leading another horse. Water tank was left and a few apples scattered around just to reassure him that friends would come back for him.

Tuesday morning, September 14th, 9:30am, the gelding is not in the same place. The ranch truck pulling the ranch trailer loaded with three horses continues down the dirt pasture road in search of the gelding. Finally he is spotted near the southern most fence line that is only half up on its posts. Old pieces of barbed wire are scattered everywhere making the area somewhat like a minefield for horses and humans alike.

10 am, three women are saddled and ready to give it their best shot at catching the gelding and transporting him back to the ranch. The gelding has other ideas; even with his bad knee he gives them a run for their money. Well not so much a run but a lopsided canter and a really fast trot.

It became clear to the ladies on horseback that tossing a rope over the gelding's neck was the only way to catch him and get him safely back to the ranch. So he was gently boxed in by two of the horses as the third horse side passed quietly alongside the gelding. In an instance the rope was over the gelding's head and dallied off, the gelding thought briefly of leaving the scene but quickly stopped and waited for what was to come next. To his surprise horse cookies showed up and a gentle hand slipped the halter over his head.

The gelding knew exactly what a horse trailer was and entered it without hesitation. The trip back to the ranch went smoothly.

The vet came to the ranch the next day and did an evaluation of both horses. The mare appears to be in her late thirties and was most likely in the very last days of her life when she was brought to the ranch. The vet believes her body had already started to shutdown and that was why she appeared to be blind at times. She is recovering slowly and it is hoped she will make a full recovery and live what is left of her life happily at the ranch.

The gelding is approximately 22 years old and has extremely bad arthritis in his knee. He appears to be in a lot of pain and we are hoping that with rest and mild medication he can be comfortable on that knee.

Now comes the question....Why? Why were these horses left alone in this open area with little or no water? The horses are old and crippled so our guess, and that of many others, is that the previous owners did not wish to give these horses a dignified death by having them euthanized because it would cost too much money! So they chose instead to let nature take its course by having them starve to death over time. They just abandoned them! These horses, that may very well have been long time family members, were just tossed aside because they were old and crippled.

Yes, these are hard economic times, money is scarce for a lot of people and no, these are not the first abandoned horses we have seen. Nor do we expect them to be the last.

What is the answer to this dilemma, does anyone know?