

UK'S LARGEST HORSE SANCTUARY SEES ABANDONMENT TRIPLE

Redwings, the largest horse sanctuary in the UK, has released figures and information which suggest that since 2009 the abandonment of horses has nearly tripled.

In 2009, 160 horses were reported to Norfolk-based Redwings as being abandoned, and in 2010 that figure was 241. The figure so far for 2011 (as at 15/11/11) is 392 with the projected total expecting to be around 460.

The charity reports seeing a rise in not only the number of calls from members of the public reporting an abandoned horse or pony but also from councils and the police who are finding horses straying on the roads, or dumped on council or private land.

Abandonment is not the answer, warns Redwings, nor are charities an easy solution.

“Abandoning your horse does not necessarily mean it will have a happy ending at a charity or sanctuary because we simply cannot accommodate them all,” comments Senior Welfare Officer Rachel Angell. “We are using all of our limited resources to ‘fire fight’ the number of welfare cases that involve advanced suffering, these have to remain a priority. A charity is unfortunately not the instant answer, as many are already stretched to the limit.”

The economic climate is playing its part insofar as it is now cheap and easy to buy an equine. There is also a decline in the number of buyers and homes currently available, which in turn has highlighted many years of indiscriminate breeding in this country. Redwings has seen ponies sell at auction for as little as £2.50 which in some instances has tempted people to buy on a whim not understanding that the costs of looking after a pony can cost upwards of around £3000 a year.

A small number of abandonments are as a result of a desperate owner falsely believing they are giving their equine a second chance by simply leaving it behind on a livery yard or on rented land. “Sadly while many abandonments are the result of dealers and breeders leaving their unwanted stock on a public road or on council or privately owned land we also suspect that some of the abandoned animals are the result of inexperienced people ridding themselves of an expensive problem,” explains Rachel.

Redwings wishes to send out two strong messages: that breeders should think carefully before producing foals and that people stop and think carefully before taking on the cost and responsibility of an equine.

“Abandoning a horse or pony is not only illegal but is extremely cruel”, concludes Rachel. “It is not in any way caring as it puts the animal through a stressful ordeal with very little chance of a good outcome.”

Anyone struggling to care for their horse is welcome to call Redwings Horse Sanctuary for free advice on 01508 481008 or read information about abandonment, including what to do if a horse has been abandoned on your land, see www.redwings.org.uk/welfare/advice-and-information/abandonment/