

SUPPORTERS' HARD WORK RESULTS IN NEW BOX FOR CHARITY

Redwings Horse Sanctuary wishes to thank everyone who kindly donated or raised funds for its horsebox appeal: two and a half years after the campaign was launched, a new bespoke Oakley box ideal for large rescues is now ready and waiting at Redwings.

The coachwork, built upon a used Volvo chassis, was built without any living area for the horses' human carers, but with many specific extras designed to ensure the horses have the most comfortable ride possible.

Adam Joslin, Welfare and Transport Manager for Redwings, said: "Oakley build horseboxes to the highest standards and have a fantastic reputation. Our lorry was designed after very close consultation with us and is bespoke for our needs. We have no need of luxurious living areas for example; our focus is purely on providing the best possible transport for our horses."

Redwings currently cares for just under 1200 horses, ponies, donkeys and mules, and rescues around 200 more each year. A further 500 equines are in Guardian homes. The Sanctuary has a small fleet of horseboxes but has been desperate to replace its ageing HGV Horse Ambulance for many years. Redwings' successful appeal raised close to £50,000 over two years.

The new lorry has air suspension which will ensure a comfortable ride and will helpfully allow staff to drop the chassis height to make a gentler slope for loading. It was also built with red night travelling lights; electric fans to keep the air flow in the back of the lorry constant, detachable grilles between the partitions in case there is a need to travel stallions, and crucially, partitions that are the width of the horsebox and that drop right to the floor.

Adam explains, "At Redwings we travel the majority of our horses loose. We have found this is much more comfortable for them and many of the horses we rescue may never have travelled in a horsebox before so it minimises the stress for them. When we carry out a rescue or transport a group of our residents we can be picking up anything from a large horse to a tiny Shetland so we specifically requested full-sized partitions which will completely remove the possibility of hooves slipping under the partition, or the smaller ponies trying to squeeze into the next section while we are travelling."

Other features specifically requested by the team at Redwings includes the installation of CCTV cameras monitored from the cab, rubber filler over the top of the ramp to help when loading, and the ability to fix the charity's unique pen sections to the back of the lorry for use in round-ups.

"We use large pen sections to round up groups of nervous or semi-feral ponies at a time," continues Adam. "This ensures we can carry out large rescues safely and effectively. Being able to attach the first two pen sections to the back of the lorry will mean we can then 'build' a pen from there." This will serve as a 'funnel' to guide the ponies up the ramp, and at the same time it will free up two members of staff that would otherwise be needed to hold the sections in place.

"We are so grateful to everyone who donated to our Horsebox appeal," continued Adam. "We chose Oakley because of their reputation and their understanding of our needs. They have built for other charities and for various police forces and we know they can do the best for us with the limited funds we have, to ensure our rescue work goes as smoothly as possible, and that our residents really can travel in style!"

Andy Hemming of Oakley Horseboxes said "We are delighted to be able to work on this project for Redwings. It is a real honour to work for such a reputable charity and we hope the end result will exceed their expectations and will make a real difference to their fantastic welfare work across the UK."

For more about Redwings, please visit www.redwings.co.uk

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Note to editors: For assistance, please contact Nicola Markwell on 01508 481014/07920 291333.

More about Redwings: Redwings Horse Sanctuary was established in 1984 and today has grown to become the largest horse charity in the UK, working to save horses, ponies, donkeys and mules whose future would otherwise be bleak. Its work has three themes: rescue & rehabilitation, specialist sanctuary care and prevention through education. Its horse care & welfare hotline receives typically 3,000 calls per year. In 2009, Redwings celebrated its Silver Jubilee. The sanctuary currently provides more than 1100 horses, ponies, donkeys and mules with specialist sanctuary care and has 500 horses out on loan in Guardian homes.