



Warning about animal overfeeding after obesity and neglect caused gross deformity of ponies' 'Aladdin slippers' hooves (film links and photographs attached)

Animal welfare experts are warning that overfeeding animals can be as cruel as starving them, after rescuing two grossly overweight horses with hooves so overgrown they “turned up like Aladdin’s slippers.” (see video link and images attached).

It follows the rescue by Bristol-based charity HorseWorld of two ponies, Jerry and JoJo, who had been forced to live with cows and eat the rich diet of a cattle herd. The ponies’ hooves, which should have been trimmed every six to eight weeks, had been left for over two years, with their excess weight making matters much worse.

Set a combined target weight loss of some 60 stone, the two ponies are now making good progress. Jerry is now more or less his ideal weight. Meanwhile JoJo has already lost weight equivalent to a whole donkey (around 20 stones) but will still be on a diet for some time to come. She has so far lost an inch and a half in height where huge fat deposits had been laid down over her back, neck and withers.

It contrasts starkly with the well-publicised cases of neglect victims Buddy and Severn-Up, found starving to death and now recovering at HorseWorld’s Welfare Yard. Parallels are being drawn with human obesity: “When most people think of animal cruelty, it’s a lack of food that comes to mind,” says HorseWorld Equine Husbandry Manager Joanne Vaughn. “But as with children, overfeeding with the wrong types of food can be equally unkind.”

Jerry and JoJo were rescued in March 2011 from a farm in Somerset. The native breed ponies should have been kept on restricted grazing. Instead, they had been allowed to live with cows and eat a rich diet including silage and cow nuts, something a horse should never be allowed to eat. Jerry and JoJo, named after two of the HorseWorld staff that nursed them back to health, are recovering at the charity’s Welfare Yard. They have received extensive veterinary treatment over the last six months.

“It was so upsetting to see them both trying to walk on their flipper-like feet.” said Joanne Vaughn. “Jerry’s hooves measured 12” from heel to toe, and were turned up like Aladdin’s slippers. Although our expert farrier managed to trim the vast majority of hoof back quite quickly, it will take a long time and specialist trimming for their hooves to become the right shape again. Jerry had such extensive hoof damage, X-rays showed the bone inside had rotated and dropped. Had they been left much longer, it is very likely the bone could have penetrated through the sole of the hoof. The pain these animals went through is unthinkable. This was completely avoidable and an inexcusable case of neglect.

“Their vast weight was clearly making it even more painful for them to walk. Both ponies have had to take painkillers every day for the last six months and JoJo has been wearing special shoes for support. JoJo was so heavy; she sunk into the ground in the paddock. She was the weight of a much larger horse trying to walk on pony sized hooves. JoJo needed to lose almost 40 stones before she would be the right weight and Jerry almost 20 stones.

“Both animals have also had to go through extensive dental work as they had not seen a dentist in over two years. They needed worming, vaccinating, microchipping and passporting all at great cost. These are simple things that every horse owner should do as routine.”

Jerry and JoJo’s owner has now been successfully prosecuted for this act of cruelty.

To see film coverage of Jerry and JoJo shortly after their rescue, please use these links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xGBxb3QUFM>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ma9CWMR6-Jc>

