



## **Cutting Cost without Compromising on Welfare**

**Equine charities receive a large number of calls every month from horse owners seeking alternative homes for their animals. There are over one million horses and donkeys in the UK and the charitable sector has limited space available and must prioritise welfare and rescue cases. Welfare organisations simply do not have the resources to take in all the horses whose owners can no longer afford to care for them. However, the Donkey Sanctuary will always provide a permanent home for any donkey or mule certified fit to travel.**

This information sheet is one of two aimed at helping owners in difficult circumstances. This is the first and aims to help owners plan for the future and reduce costs without compromising their horse's welfare. The accompanying document, 'Responsible Re-homing', outlines the main options available if you find that having a horse is an expense you can definitely no longer afford. The term horse is used to cover all domestic equine species, including horses, ponies, donkeys, hinnies and mules.

### **Always Plan Ahead**

Anyone considering horse ownership should look into the cost, care and commitment required before deciding to take a horse on. There are three areas of expense you must be prepared for:

- Routine maintenance (e.g. livery bills, feed, bedding, insurance)
- Unforeseen circumstances (e.g. accident, illness and equipment damages)
- Euthanasia and disposal of the body. This may become necessary at any point in a horse's life. It is far better to make provision for this well before you need it than to find you're struggling to afford it when the time comes.

It is worth thinking about the re-homing potential of any horse before you take on ownership so that you are prepared for the future. Prior to purchase, it is essential to ensure that you are aware of any existing or likely issues you may have to deal with, including behavioural problems. The horse should undergo a pre-purchase veterinary examination.

### **Cutting Cost without Compromising on Welfare**

Caring for a horse properly is never going to be cheap, but there are areas where you can minimise costs.

#### **1. Feeding**

The majority of horses manage very well on a forage-based diet and if necessary one vitamin and mineral supplement. A veterinary surgeon or nutritionist can advise whether your horse really needs additional feed or supplements. Fortnightly weigh taping and body condition scoring will help you monitor your horse's health and could save you money. Horse weigh tapes do not work for donkeys; use a heart-girth measurement instead (please contact the Donkey Sanctuary for advice on taking these measurements).

#### **2. Bedding**

There are many bedding products on the market. Look into alternatives and decide what will work best for you and your horse. For example, although there is a high initial expense in fitting rubber matting, it can soon pay for itself in reduced bedding costs.

#### **3. Livery / location**

One of the biggest costs for many owners is a livery yard fee. Review the facilities you are paying for to check that you do need and use everything you are paying for. If you are paying for someone else to provide all or part of your horse's day-to-day care, it may reduce costs if you were able to do more yourself, even on a temporary basis.

Many horses can do very well on permanent turnout. It could be worth looking around for a suitable grass livery or renting a field, which can be even cheaper if it is shared with friends.



#### **4. Horse share**

To reduce costs in all areas, look into sharing your horse with someone else or keeping the horse on working livery. This will also reduce your workload.

#### **5. Working together**

If you share a yard with other people, why not club together to save money and time:

- Many feed, forage and bedding suppliers may offer reduced rates if they deliver in bulk.
- Ask veterinary surgeons, farriers and other professionals if they can reduce rates for group bookings.
- Save fuel by sharing transport whenever you can
- Work as a team with other owners to share daily duties, this will save time and fuel.

#### **6. Routine veterinary care**

Discuss worming and feeding routines with your veterinary surgeon to make sure you are using the most effective and economical regimes. BEVA horse health programmes may be helpful: go to [www.beva.org.uk](http://www.beva.org.uk)

#### **7. Farriery**

Discuss the shoeing options for your horse with your farrier; you may find your horse doesn't need to have a full set of shoes. If there is not much wear on the horse's shoes your farrier may be able to refit them.

#### **8. Resist marketing**

Horses have simple needs. When money is in short supply think very carefully about what is REALLY needed for your horse's welfare. Make sure you are not buying unnecessary supplements, rugs or equipment. Looking after existing equipment helps it last longer, even if it starts to show its age.

#### **False Economies**

There are some essential areas of horse care where corners should never be cut. These are the fundamentals of responsible horse ownership; short-term savings can put the horse's welfare at risk and can cost the owner a lot more in the long run. The essentials include:

- Proper veterinary care. Do not be tempted to diagnose and treat a condition yourself.
- Vaccinations. Lapsed vaccinations leave your horse vulnerable to disease.
- Regular hoof care. Taking shoes off to save money without consulting your veterinary surgeon or farrier could lead to lameness and expense as some horses are not able to go barefoot.
- Worming and dental checks. These essentials can be reviewed, as outlined above, but not avoided.
- Professional services. Do not employ a cheaper, unqualified person to do a professional's job.
- Repairs to damaged property and equipment are vital to safeguard your horse's safety and security.
- Insurance. If you are not insured against veterinary fees you must be confident that you could pay an unexpected veterinary bill. Third party liability cover is highly advisable for all horse owners.

#### **Be Realistic**

It is vital to look ahead and budget effectively to meet the needs of your horse. Ideally, put a little away every month or when you can, to help you manage if and when unforeseen problems arise.

Be realistic about the effect on your horse, both short and long term, should your financial circumstances change. Not facing up to looming difficulties can greatly reduce the options available to you once the problem has become too overwhelming to ignore. Taking advice on personal budget management before your finances get out of hand may also help you make the savings necessary to keep your horse.

**This leaflet has been produced by the member organisations of the National Equine Welfare Council.**

**For further advice, please contact the NEWC office on 01926 866655 or e-mail [info@newc.co.uk](mailto:info@newc.co.uk) for details of your local NEWC member.**



## REHOMING CASE STUDY: GARY

In April of this year Gary suffered excruciating pain in all four feet. Although Gary was living in what some might see as good accommodation with 10 acres of lush, rich grazing and a choice of adlib hay, he had been badly neglected by his previous owner.



Gary was suffering from chronic laminitis and obesity. He had not received any veterinary treatment for this painful condition. He had over grown feet and a heavy worm burden. During Gary's rehabilitation he received several vet and farrier visits. He needed to be on a high dose of pain relief and receive remedial farriery foot trimming. X-rays to his feet proved movement to the pedal bone which has been corrected slowly over time. Gary had weeks of box rest on a thick shavings bed and an intensive worming programme. He was put on a special fibre diet and his weight was monitored regularly

Gary can be nervous of strangers and we believe he may have been twitched by his left ear. Now rehabilitated Gary has been broken to ride at Felledge. He is probably more suited to a gentle hacking home with people who have experience of Laminitics.

Gary lives in at night and is turned out during the day for five hours. He has proved to be sociable the field with other horses and is good to catch, lead, and groom.



For more information on the RSPCA rehoming process for horses you can view a video or download a form at <http://www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/horses/rehoming/ownership/process>

## Rehoming case study: Gwyneth



Gwyneth was rescued in March 2011 from appalling conditions. She was in very poor condition and sick from being forced to eat poisonous plants due to starvation. It was clear that she had not had any handling before arrival but as she was so poorly and needed lots of TLC she quickly realised we were there to help.

HorseWorld has spent a lot of time and loving effort to get Gwyneth to trust people after the horrid condition she came from, she took a long time to be convinced as she was very nervous.

Gwyneth has been slowly backed over the past year and has come on fantastically well, she was surprisingly willing considering how nervous she was even being patted and groomed. She is now hacking out in company and is coming on well with her schooling, she has just starting the basics jumping and is going well.

She is generally a forward going and easy ride with an experienced rider but has started to become very unresponsive to less experienced or weak riders - to the point that she refuses to move! She has been cantered on grass in company and is very responsive but not at all strong.





## Rehoming case study: Stiltskin



Stiltskin was part of the Amersham rescue in 2008, where he was rescued by Redwings, the RSPCA and other welfare charities as one of over a hundred horses found living in terrible conditions and surrounded by the bodies of more than 30 dead equines. Stiltskin arrived at Redwings in terrible condition and was extremely nervous. So much so that he would be aggressive towards anyone who came near him and he required extensive rehabilitation from the charity's specialist team.

Stiltskin is now looking for a loving home through the Redwings Guardianship Scheme. He loves hacking, has experience in light traffic and with farm vehicles and is happy in front or behind. He is happy to walk, trot and canter and pop a little jump in the school but he is still green. He is fantastic to groom and will stand for ages having his beautiful mane brushed!





## Rehoming case study: Spencer, Boyd & Young

Spencer, Boyd and Young came to Blue Cross horse centre in Rolleston after being rescued from a farm where they were living in extreme squalor. They had been left to roam in a cement yard by their owner, without proper food, shelter or veterinary attention. The one year olds were skinny and weak, crawling with lice and extremely anxious. Boyd became especially agitated around feeding times, shaking his head violently and shying away whenever we approached. This was a poignant reminder of a traumatic past in which he had to fight other horses for food. All three ponies had received little or no handling and were very nervous of people. This made caring for them and administering veterinary treatment very difficult, but with time and expert rehabilitation, the ponies began to turn the corner.

As well as treating them for their ailments, the three ponies received intensive daily handling to slowly build up their trust in people again. Over time they have all progressed well and Young and Spencer were able to be turned out for grass together, which they thoroughly enjoyed and was an emotional day for the team. With consistent handling from both staff and volunteers they were soon ready for rehoming.

Early this year, Spencer and Young were rehomed on a short term loan to a local family farm. After two years they will return to the centre to undergo the backing process with the hope to rehome them as riding ponies. Boyd is taking a little longer to gain confidence but Blue Cross grooms are persisting with his handling and ground work and hope he will soon find the home he deserves.





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Celebrating 85 years of helping horses

## Rehoming case study: Florence

Florence is a 10 year old bay mare of 14.3hh who was brought to Hall Farm in October 2010 by a World Horse Welfare field officer. She was severely underweight with a foal at foot and was weak and anaemic on arrival.

Florence has been successfully rehabilitated by the team of grooms at Hall Farm. Now 10, she has a lovely, gentle temperament and was backed at Hall Farm last year. Due to this, she is still very green and potential rehomers will need to be confident riders.



Florence will be rehomed as a hack only, because she is unable to do any jumping or serious schooling due to a sidebone ailment.

Florence's kind and laid back temperament mean she will make a lovely ridden horse, and she just needs time to gain more experience with the right person. Her maximum rider weight limit is 10.5 stones and her suggested loan fee is £200.

For more information  
<http://www.worldhorsewelfare.org/>

