

CONTRIBUTE TO THE UNWANTED HORSE COALITION

You can help the Unwanted Horse Coalition in educating the equine community about the problem of unwanted horses. You can also contribute to support Operation Gelding. Please make a tax-deductible contribution to the UHC or Operation Gelding through the American Horse Council Foundation, a non-profit Section 501(c)(3) organization.

If you wish to help fund this important effort, please contact the American Horse Council:

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unwantedhorsecoalition.org

For a current list of Unwanted Horse Coalition member organizations, please visit the UHC website: unwantedhorsecoalition.org



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Preventing Unwanted Horses

Geld and Spay



THE HORSE INDUSTRY HAS UNDERTAKEN MANY NEW AND SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES OVER THE LAST DECADE to address the issue of unwanted horses. Rehoming programs, education about responsible ownership, and increased rescue and retirement options have all helped create a better life for horses that were previously without a caregiver.

Unfortunately, tens of thousands of horses in the U.S. remain unwanted. Although no one knows for certain exactly how many unwanted horses currently exist in the United States, we do know that the number is too high for the resources available to accommodate them.

Gelding and spaying horses is an important solution for all in the horse industry to consider. Responsible horse owners who prevent their animals' reproduction can significantly reduce the number of unwanted horses, resulting in improved welfare and resources for the entire equine population.

RESPONSIBLE OWNERSHIP BEGINS WITH RESPONSIBLE BREEDING

Gelding and spaying are critical in controlling the equine population and should be considered for that alone. These practices have also long been used to improve breed quality and to correct behavioral issues.

Responsible breeders carefully consider multiple factors when selecting horses for breeding. These include health, soundness, conformation, athletic ability or performance history, disposition, and pedigree. Not all horses should be bred.

Although chances are low that horses in a controlled environment will find a way to breed, gelding and spaying horses of minimal breeding quality will also prevent future owners, who may not exercise responsible control, from breeding those horses. The long life expectancy and the frequency with which horses change hands over a lifetime should make this a primary concern of every responsible horse owner.





GELDING

In gelding a horse, the veterinarian removes the testicles which produce the hormone testosterone. This is the hormone that is responsible for sperm production as well as aggressive, sometimes dangerous, behavior including fighting and mounting. Left intact, a mature stallion may become progressively more difficult to manage and train as he becomes older.

In most cases geldings are preferred over stallions for pleasure riding and for competition because they are typically calmer, easier to handle, and more tractable. It is for these reasons that a gelding is also more likely to be adopted out of a care facility.

Gelding a horse that is not an attractive commercial breeding prospect may ensure their viability in an alternate career. A stallion or colt with no commercial use as a breeding animal is an unattractive proposition for a new owner for several reasons:

- The owner faces the costs of a gelding surgery in addition to other expenses required to prepare a horse for a new career

- Stallions require specialized housing, fencing, and turnout
- Farm owners and individual horse owners have considerable legal exposure for the actions of their animals

Many prospective buyers are not equipped to house or manage a stallion and therefore may overlook an otherwise suitable horse.

SPAYING

Ovariectomy, or “spaying,” is a surgical procedure in which a veterinarian removes a mare’s ovaries, rendering her incapable of reproduction. Because of the costs and risks associated with abdominal surgery, spaying is far less common than gelding and is usually reserved for medical reasons, such as ovarian tumors.

While spaying is one way to prevent pregnancy in a mare, it is also an option when, in extreme cases, behaviors associated with estrus make a mare unmanageable, unridable, or dangerous. These may include irritability, aggression, biting, kicking, persistent

vocalization, back soreness, and lack of focus. Like gelding, spaying can create future career options that might have been limited by hormone-related behavior.

In less severe cases, hormone therapy may be enough to eliminate or greatly reduce undesirable behaviors. These include synthetic hormone treatments, injectable progesterone, progesterone implants, and intra-uterine devices. While various forms of hormone therapies will keep a mare out of heat, they do not completely stop her from cycling and are not, therefore, guaranteed to prevent pregnancy.

OWN RESPONSIBLY— CONSIDER GELDING AND SPAYING

In today’s world, in which far too many horses become unwanted each year, gelding, spaying, and hormone therapy is the responsible choice for many horses. By considering these practices, breeders and owners are “owning responsibly.” Talk to a veterinarian to learn more.

For more information about gelding, spaying, and hormone therapy, visit the website of the American Association of Equine Practitioners at www.aaep.org.



OPERATION GELDING

The Unwanted Horse Coalition is doing its part to solve the unwanted horse problem through its Operation Gelding program.

Operation Gelding provides funds and materials to assist organizations and groups that wish to host low-cost or free clinics in which horse owners can have their stallions castrated by a certified veterinarian. The impetus for these clinics is that the castration of a stallion will help prevent overbreeding, in turn reducing the number of unwanted horses. Castrations will also produce a gentler horse that is more rideable, trainable, salable, and adoptable, allowing them to be used in several careers.

The UHC provides the information and forms necessary to conduct a clinic, along with seed money to defray the costs. Funds of \$50 per horse gelded, with a \$1,000 maximum, will be awarded to participating groups once in a 12-month period. Any organization, facility, or group is invited to participate in the Operation Gelding program. The UHC wants to involve as many people as possible. Past groups have included veterinary schools, equine rescues, and 4-H clubs, among others.

Since its inception in 2010, Operation Gelding has assisted in castrating over 1,000 stallions with that number steadily growing.

If you would like to host a clinic or find out where the next clinic is being held, please contact the Unwanted Horse Coalition. More information can also be found on the website at www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org or on the UHC Facebook page.