



I Can No Longer Care For My Horse. What Options are Available?

Sometimes the horse is very much wanted, but an owner's circumstances do not allow them to keep their beloved horse. There are options to find a good home.

Did You Know? Legally, as a seller, you must share anything important you know about the horse's behavior and physical condition.

Ideally, we can keep our horses forever. But, this is not always the case. If you find yourself in the position where you are no longer able to care for your horse, there are several options available. Most are based on the health, soundness, age and temperament of your horse. Some options have strict criteria for qualification; not every horse is suitable for every job.

Private Sale

Selling your horse to another person enables you to meet the buyer. You can advertise your horse for sale in local papers and horse magazines, on websites, at feed and tack stores, shows, or rides in your area, or by contacting area lesson barns. Prices and conditions vary by sale and region, so be aware of standards in your area. This is easy to do with an online search. Also, in a private sale, you might have the option of putting a buy-back agreement into the sale. That way, if the new owner decides to sell the horse, you'll have an opportunity to buy the horse back first. It is important to disclose any health problems, limitations or vices that your horse might have when selling him. Search "12 Tips for Selling a Horse" on www.thehorse.com for tips. Another option is to hire a broker, but expect to pay a fee.

Auctions

Often a quick way to sell a horse is by taking it to auction. Local sale barns or fairgrounds can provide dates. Many auctions are advertised in newspaper classifieds or at feed and tack stores, and on various websites. Be aware of the types of animals that are being sold at various auctions. Almost all horse auctions involve the sale of horses to individuals who want to buy a horse for various purposes, such as racing, showing, or recreational riding. Many of these horses have "reserves" or minimum bids that must be paid for the sale to be completed. If the reserve is not met, the horse would be returned to the seller. Other sales do not have minimums and the horse is sold regardless of the bid price. In some of these sales, dealers are purchasing horses that will be processed for human consumption overseas. All owners should be aware of this possibility if they choose to sell at auction.

Leasing

An increasingly popular form of horse "ownership" is leasing. Provided the horse is sound with a good disposition, many people are interested in owning horses that would prefer this "try-before-you-buy" option. It provides an opportunity for potential owners to see how a horse would fit into their lives. As leasing grows in popularity, so do the forms of lease payments. You can loan the horse in exchange for boarding and daily care, or you can create another lease deal with the lessee.

Donating

Owners may choose to donate their horse to a facility or program such as a high school or college with a riding program, or an EAAT center. There are several options, but there are far more unwanted horses than spaces in these programs, so don't expect the process to be easy. Although the UHC does not endorse one particular facility, it supports the Care Guidelines for Equine Rescue and Retirement

Facilities, developed by the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP). If you've decided to find a retirement home for your horse, we strongly encourage you to read these guidelines and ensure the facility you're considering operates by them. While the vast majority of retirement facilities are run honestly and with the horses' best interests at heart, there have been reports of horses abused and neglected at some facilities.

Retirement Facilities

A retirement facility can be compared to an assisted living facility for people. The staff is trained in caring for the health issues facing older horses and those with injuries. But, retirement facilities are typically not free. The owner pays a monthly board bill just as they would at any boarding facility. A less common model has the owner sign the horse over to the organization then pay a yearly tax-deductible donation for the care.

Therapeutic Riding Centers

There are multiple therapeutic riding centers around the country. These centers provide a variety of equine activities to people with physical, emotional and learning disabilities. For individuals with special needs, equine-assisted activities have been shown to improve muscle tone, balance, posture, coordination, motor development, as well as emotional well-being. If you are interested in this option, look for an organization and instructors certified by PATH International.

Mounted Police

The mounted unit pursues a fourfold mission that consists of traffic control, crowd control, community relations, and prevention of street crime. These units usually have very specific requirements that their horses need to meet, including: sex, age, height, health, confirmation, and even color.

Colleges and Universities

Schools with an animal science department that includes an equine research component or a veterinary school may accept your horse to be used in teaching/research to benefit medical advancements in the equine field. Potential donations to be used in academic riding programs are often evaluated using stringent criteria as far as soundness, disposition, amount of training and age.

Prison System

Some retired horses find themselves in the prison system. Not only does your horse benefit from the care but the inmates benefit as well.

Horses that are not sound or have uneven temperaments can be very difficult to place, and owners may consider euthanasia instead of risking an unknown future. For those who feel uncomfortable making those decisions, there may be a One-Day Shelter program in your area. Owners can surrender their

Rescue vs. Retirement	
There is often confusion between these two types of facilities. This table lists the primary differences.	
<p>RESCUE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglected, abused horses • Emergency care • Horses removed from owners or abandoned • Horses may be adopted out when recovered from trauma • Programs funded by donations, non-profit • "Owner Initiated Surrenders" are not generally accepted* 	<p>RETIREMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older, pensioned horses • Injuries that make them unsuitable for work • Maintenance care needed • Horses are privately owned • Private boarding facilities, for-profit
<p><i>* Some rescues have switched to this model in the hopes of keeping the horses from going to auction. Other rescues will assist the owners with re-homing the horse without moving him or being signed over to the rescue.</i></p>	

horses at no cost with no questions asked. The horse is then assessed by professionals for quality of life and adoptability. Look up The Right Horse Initiative to learn more.