

Top 10 Tips for Planning a Successful Equine Adoption Event



Ideas to help you find homes for more horses

1. Assemble a Stellar Committee:

- As much as possible, choose people with diverse skills and contacts (graphic artists, PR gurus, event planners, community movers and shakers, etc.)
- Meet regularly and more frequently as the event gets closer
- Create a planning calendar identifying all tasks associated with the event and the deadlines for each—and make sure committee members have easy access to it
- Assign each member a specific task or tasks
- Identify what additional volunteers you need and recruit them

Note: To find these superstars, ask your current volunteers for referrals, reach out on social media and use volunteer referral sites like [Idealist.org](https://www.idealists.org) or [VolunteerMatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org).



2. Name & Prioritize Goals:

- How many adoptions do you hope to do?
- Are there specific equines you are targeting for adoption—if so, what are you doing to highlight them? (Social media, special adoption fee, sign on stall, etc.)
- What is your media plan?
- Would partnering with other organizations help you to achieve your adoption goal?



Note: As you plan, weigh every major decision against your adoption goals. If an idea doesn't address at least one goal, no matter how appealing it seems, save it for another time.

3. Identify Potential Adopters:

- Age range (Consider a Senior for Seniors promotion)
- Geographic area
- Partners (Are you open to transporting a horse to another agency?)
- Experience level (Will you adopt to first-time horse owners? If so, how will you support them?)
- Riding style



Note: Make sure you capture the contact information for everyone who attends your event by having attendees check in with a staff person or volunteer.

4. Align Adoption Event to Goals & Audience:

- Where are you most likely to encounter your potential adopter?
- What would be most appealing to your potential adopter?
- Is your event accessible to all? (If not, are there things you can do to accommodate people with disabilities?)
- Consider how you can also raise funds during your adoption event (raffles, auctions, sponsorships, etc.).



5. Choose a Creative Theme:

- **Read to Rescues** – Invite families to the farm to read to and interact with adoptable equines.
- **Derby Fashion Show** – Host a derby-themed event complete with adoptable equines in big hats.
- **Trainers' Challenge** – Partner with experienced or novice trainers on a competition with adoptable horses vying for prizes in various categories, including Halter/Condition, Pleasure, Trail/Obstacle, Freestyle, and Vet/Farrier.
- **Dance Competition** – Pair professional dancers with local celebrities and have each team dance in honor of a horse—make sure to showcase the horse in a video or in real life before the team competes.
- **Adoption Jamboree** – Invite previous adopters and their horses back to your farm to show off what adopted horses can do. You'll inspire new adopters and maybe even stir previous adopters to adopt again.



6. Budget Wisely:

- Create a detailed budget, including expenses and revenues
- Note which items have up-front costs and make sure you have the cash to cover them
- Obtain event sponsorships from individuals and local businesses—these can be cash donations or in-kind donations or discounts on goods and services



Note: Don't list an item as donated until you are absolutely sure it's going to come through.

7. Pick Your Date & Time Wisely:

- Consider the best time of day for an event—is lighting or temperature important?
- Match your event length with the activity—three or four hours is appropriate for a gala but too long for a fashion show
- Consider piggybacking on another organization's event—could you do a progressive where attendees go from one location to another?



Note: Check calendars to make sure your event doesn't conflict with other community events (with which you are not partnering).

8. Use Clever Marketing Techniques:

- Create a separate event Facebook group and hashtag
- Bus ads
- Yard signs
- Inserts in utility bills
- Flyers on pizza delivery boxes
- Parades
- Engage local or national celebrities (if they can't be there in person, ask them to donate an item to be auctioned or give a written or video testimonial)
- Piggyback on other community events (blood drives, garage sales, etc.)



Note: Some organizations have found success with street teams or guerilla marketing, where volunteers or staff take to heavily trafficked areas to pass out flyers and freebies advertising their adoption promotion. For example, you could pass out adoption coupons at a farmer's market.

9. Show Appreciation:

- Give your volunteers tasks you have trained them on and that they can handle
- Provide a break room for volunteers during the event if it is longer than a few hours
- Offer volunteers food and drink before, during or after the event depending on what makes sense



Note: Be sure volunteers know how much money was raised and/or how many animals were adopted. They want to know how their service directly contributed to your mission.

10. Share Thanks and Results:

- Let supporters and volunteers know how much you appreciate them through handwritten notes and email
- Social media
- Website
- Newsletter

Note: Thanking people is not only polite, it will help ensure their participation in future events. And again, be sure to include the good news of positive outcomes in your acknowledgements!

