Horse Matchmaking 101: Evaluation and Training

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In 2012, The Dumb Friends League opened the Harmony Equine Center as a full-service intake and sheltering facility for abused and neglected equines who have been removed from owners’ care by law enforcement authorities.
Accommodates impounds from a single animal up to large-scale impounds.

168-acre facility: includes 4 sizable, well-equipped barns for intake & impound, isolation, treatment & training and adoptions
Standards to Follow

• Establish guidelines that you follow and stick to them
• Take in horses who fulfill the mission and goals of your organization
• Definition and standards equine evaluation
• Compromised quality of life
• Taking in horses you can’t place based on emotion
• Unadoptable horses due to behavior or medical conditions
• It’s hard to say no!
• Looks can be deceiving
Unadoptable horses can hinder the number of horses you help

- Chronic health problems: lameness, contagious diseases
- Dangerous: aggression toward humans by intentionally or maliciously biting, kicking or striking
- Older, unhandled stallions or cryptorchid of any age
- No respect for human space
- Horses are dangerous enough
- Horses that do not respond to re-training
- Rescues are not sanctuaries
3 Phase Program Evaluation Process

- Medical plan
- Behavior assessment
- Placement opportunities
Record Animal Information

- Body Condition Score
- Age
- Weight
- Height
- Markings
- Color
- Equine type
- Lameness
- Farrier
Health Examination

- Temperature
- Heart rate
- Respiratory rate
- Lungs
- Sand
- Eyes
- Lymph nodes
- Teeth
- Lameness issues
- Establish feeding protocol and medical treatment
Medical Treatment Plan

• Establish a veterinarian approved treatment plan
• Feeding protocol
• Sand clear
• Dental floats
• Vaccinations
• Lameness
• Farrier
Step 1: Lameness
Things to Look for

- Stands tied
- Stands tied close to other horses
- Can be approached in turnout
- Calm when haltered
- Moves hindquarters away from pressure on hind
- Stands calmly while body is brushed
- Picks up all four feet and stands calmly while foot is held
- Stand calmly for blanket/fly sheet
Things to Look for

• Stands calmly for fly spray
• Stands calmly while legs hosed with water
• Stands calmly for rectal temperature
• Stands calmly for oral administration of fluid from syringe or tube
• Leads, turns, stops and backs
• Led through a gate
• Calmly trailer loads and unloads
Step 2: Horse Temperament
Things to Look for

- Kicks
- Bites
- Hard to catch/handle
- Run’s over handler
- Fearful
- Strikes
- Rears
- Threatening/Aggressive
- Fights with other horses
Training Techniques
Step 3 Moving with a Saddle
Training Techniques

- Natural horsemanship (Pressure and Release)
- Not every horse is a riding horse
- Find what a horse does best
- Pass the basic behavior test
- Not every horse can be trained
- Willing to learn
- 30 day increments
- Record progress
- We didn’t create the problems – it’s up to us to find solutions
Training Techniques

- Professional trainers
- Saddle horses
- Ground work
- Volunteers
- Farrier
- Veterinarians
- Staff

- If you can’t afford a trainer, at least invest in someone to help evaluate your horses
Step 4: Riding
Training Techniques

• Invest in the evaluation process.
• We have evaluated hundreds of horses for rescues and found they are misinformed on what the horse is and what the horse is best suited for.
• People don’t tell the truth when they surrender horses.
Right Fit for Your Program
Making the Match

• The horse has been evaluated, trained and passed your evaluations. If you don’t know your horses, how can you make a match?

• Team has evaluated the horse and everyone agrees the horse is ready to be shown

• 3 lessons with adopters

• No home is perfect

• Don’t make it so restrictive

• No one is good enough

• Take time with adopters
Not a Fit for this Program
Making the Match

• Develop a **Follow Up Program**
• Stay in communication for the first 60 days
• Be honest about the horses limitations and abilities
• Interview the adopter to really get to know what they are looking for and what they plan on doing
• Plans and lives change
• Don’t over or under sell your horse
• Take the time and work with adopter
Questions to Ask Adopters

• What are your goals?
• What is the age range you are interest in?
• What is your size range?
• What is your experience level?
• Are you willing to work with a trainer?
• What is your perfect horse?
• How many days a week do you plan on riding or working with the horse?
How We Find Adopters

• Attend local events: Horse Expo, Colorado Horse Park, Douglas County Fairgrounds, Colorado State University

• Host continuing education classes for community

• Television interviews

• Equine comeback challenge

• Adoption Days Fri-Sun

• Harmony Horse Expo

• Community papers

• Radio advertising

• Print advertising

• Social media
Questions?

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