

Horses rescued from sanctuary finding new homes outside of Bitterroot



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CORVALLIS - The time for horses rescued from a now-defunct Niarada animal shelter is coming to a close in the Bitterroot Valley.

Close to 100 horses and donkeys were transported to Ravalli County as part of the rescue operation that unfolded over several weeks, starting late last year.

About three-quarters of those animals have found new homes.

The remaining 22 horses will be moved to a sanctuary in Texas in April if no has stepped forward to adopt them by then.

The horses have been treated and cared for at Michael Wilder's farm on Dutch Hill Road by a cadre of volunteers since arriving in the valley in January.

Many arrived in horrible condition. Some had overgrown hooves. Others were malnourished or suffered from other medical issues related to neglect.

Since then, with proper care from a team of veterinarians, farriers and dedicated volunteers, nearly all of the horses have made a remarkable recovery.

Shannon Alexander of Western Montana Equine Rescue and Rehabilitation of Corvallis said there is still time for people to adopt one of the horses.

There is a variety of animals left that range from a pair of huge draft horses to standard riding horses. Some could be used for riding and others are looking for a nice place to retire.

"We have a few that have been ridden at some point in their lives and others that are green and would require training," Alexander said.

People can learn more about the horses available for adoption by going to www.montanahorsesanctuary.org. On the home page of the website, look for the photograph of the donkey. In the text under that photography there is a link that says "horses and donkeys available for adoption."

There are photographs and a brief description of the horses looking for a home. There is also an adoption form.

People without access to the Internet can call Jane Heath at (406) 264-5300.

The adoption fee is \$50. People interested in adopting a horse will need references and their facilities will be inspected before the adoption is finalized.

"Anyone who is interested in adopting a horse needs to do that as soon as possible," Alexander said.

The first load of horses is expected to leave the Bitterroot on April 6.

Despite rumors to the contrary, Alexander said the horses eventually moved to Texas will not be slaughtered.

"That's completely incorrect," she said.

The Habitat for Horses Sanctuary in Texas is "totally against slaughter of horses and so are we," Alexander said. "It doesn't even make any sense. Why would we go through everything that we have just to have these slaughtered?"

"It's the most ludicrous thought that I can even imagine," she said.

It's taken a dedicated effort on the part of many people to rescue the horses from the Montana Large Animal Sanctuary in Niarada and then care for them over past few months.

Alexander said many people deserve a large round of thanks, including Michael Wilder who offered his horse ranch as a place to pasture the horses.

"I don't know how we could thank him enough," Alexander said. "Without this very generous gift, this operation would have been much more difficult."

"We're just hoping now that we can find a few more good homes for these remaining horses before the end of the month."