

# Volunteers trim rescued donkeys' hooves

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CORVALLIS - A coalition of Montana animal rescue groups are giving more than a 1,000 large animals a new home after a Hot Springs sanctuary ran out of money.

The overgrown hooves on 31 donkeys from the Montana Large Animal Sanctuary and Rescue prompted a rescue group representative to file a report with the Sanders County sheriff's department and seek veterinary help.

**Montana Animal Care Association** president Phyllis Ruana decided to transport the donkeys to a temporary foster home in Corvallis more than 100 miles away, but much closer to dozens of volunteer veterinarians and farriers.

"It just made sense," Ruana said. "If something happens overnight, the veterinarian is down the road."

The donkeys wobbled on their long, forward-curling hooves Wednesday as rescuers led them to their veterinary station.

"All equines - horses, donkeys, mini horses and so forth - have to have their feet trimmed on a regular basis," Montana Horse Sanctuary executive director and founder Jane Heath said. "The foot continues to grow just like a fingernail would."

"This is over a long period of time; this did not happen in a year," Ruana said. "It's been like this for awhile and this is something we could tend to right now."

It took farriers at least 15 minutes to saw, cut and clip each hoof before the donkeys could stand flat-footed. Heath said tending to this group of donkeys is the first step to the complete rescue.

"These were the guys who were the most obviously in trouble, so we felt, help the worst ones first and we'll keep workin' at it," she said.

Before the farriers trimmed the donkeys' hooves, veterinarians took x-rays to examine the bones underneath.

"They're gonna be a little sore, it's just like if you cut your fingernails too short," Ruana said.

"You're gonna be a little sore, but they'll be able to move; they'll be able to get around."

"Animals know when something good's happenin' for 'em. I think, tonight who knows what they'll be doin' with some of this knocked off their feet."

The Montana Animal Care Association, Montana Horse Sanctuary, Montana Office of the Humane Society of the United States and Western Montana Equine Rescue and Rehabilitation all organized the effort.