

Kansas Shelters See Surge in Abandoned Horses

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No Paws Left Behind

No Paws Left Behind, an organization that helps find homes for pets abandoned after foreclosure, found this llama in California.



WICHITA, Kan. — Dogs and cats aren't the only animals suffering as the economy takes a toll on pet owners.

Rescue groups in Kansas say they're seeing a surge in the number of horses being abandoned, especially older horses.

"Their owners can't or don't want to take care of them and turn them loose," said Andre Miller, president and founder of the Hope in the Valley Equine Rescue and Sanctuary near Valley Center. "Animal control picks them up and brings them to us. We are getting more starved and neglected animals."

Rescue groups like Hope in the Valley take care of homeless horses and try to find people willing to adopt them. But that's becoming harder as the prices of hay and grain rise, and rescue groups are receiving fewer

donations.

[Click here to see photos of rescued pets.](#)

Miller said the 3-year-old shelter normally cares for 10 to 15 abandoned horses at any given time. But in recent months that number has jumped to between 25 and 30 animals.

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Some of the horses are adopted quickly while others may spend years at the shelter.

Not all the stories end happily. Sedgwick County animal control officers seized a group of horses, including 7-month-old colt Emmett, and brought them to the shelter after finding them without food or water. Counties can seize animals or work with owners to

bring horses up to health standards.

Veterinarians recently euthanized Emmett, who was born with crooked legs, after determining he was in pain.

County officials said the holiday made it difficult to say exactly how many horses had been abandoned last week but they said the spike is due to many factors.

"The economy enters into it but it is just one of the issues," said Glen Wilse, director of Sedgwick County's code enforcement, which oversees the animal control department. "Your older horses require higher-priced feed to maintain the rate of health. They require more care. People want them but sometimes forget they have to have all the special care."

It typically costs between \$1,500 and \$2,000 a year to maintain a horse, not including veterinary costs, Miller said.

"We notice these horses aren't having the care they need," said Wichita veterinarian Jason Kiser, who often consults with Miller's rescue group. "With the economy the way it is, people are having trouble making ends meet. They are not able to take care of the horses like they would want."

In addition, more horses are coming to the attention of authorities as new laws allow them to get involved in potential abuse or neglect cases sooner. Also, television shows have made people more

people aware of animal abuse and willing to report problems, said Karen Everhart, executive director and co-founder of Rainbow Meadows Equine Ranch and Retirement near Sedan.

Officials with rescue groups hopes that increased awareness also means bigger donations to their operations.

"We rely mostly on donations and my paycheck," said Miller, a full-time nurse. "The donations are down to trickles."