



New Mare

It is difficult to believe how such a young horse could have so many serious health issues and at just seven years old. Starting at the top, the first anomaly is that the tip of the mare's ear bends back oddly. But then she has the most beautiful, large, round, brown eyes. She looks into your eyes with such expectation.



The lack of food has caused her to be U-necked and makes her withers look more prominent. When you move around to the opposite side, there is a huge, hard lump encompassing her wither. This is called a fistula and could be caused by any number of different pathogens. What is worrisome is that she had been in with cattle before being taken in by a young man. Cattle can transmit Brucellosis, which is a bacterial disease typically affecting cattle and buffalo and is highly contagious. There is a small chance, a very small chance, that this may be what this fistula is. This is serious and can be passed on to people if it is shedding the bacteria. The fistula has to break open in order for shedding to occur, but it doesn't feel ready to do so yet. We did have our vet pull a culture to make sure what we are dealing with, as well as give a rabies vaccine. (We had to do the same thing with Prairie before we had the infected area cut open and drained.)

The fistula could also have been caused by a number of other different possibilities, one being an ill-fitting saddle. The other side of the withers looks as if the muscles have been atrophied, which would suggest that an ill-fitting saddle was used that was too tight. There are no muscles on that side. A hard blow to the withers from either a fall into something, or for some other reason, can cause this type of fistula and damage to the withers.

Moving down this poor, chestnut, Saddlebred mare's body, everywhere you touch she reacts with pain. The hocks are terribly swollen and it is surprising how well she moves given her issues.

It only gets worse from there, just when you think it can't possibly. She has degenerative suspensory ligament desmitis (DSLDD), or as many call this illness now, equine systemic proteoglycan accumulation (ESPA). We have seen this condition way too many times here at the sanctuary. The researchers are studying genetics when looking for an answer to this illness. It doesn't take much to destroy a horse's tendons to get this disease started. The socially correct thing is to say it is genetic. We feel that most of the time, this illness is caused by stupid people. The illness can spread all through the horse's body, affecting almost every part of the horse, including the eyes, lungs and any connective tissue. Doesn't that sound like an auto immune disease to you? Once the tendons are injured and are not given time to heal, the body over produces what is needed to heal the tendons and this causes the problems throughout the body. She is showing damage in all four legs and the fetlocks are dropping.

In all of my 65 years of hanging out with horses, I have never seen such a young horse in such terrible condition. We were told that the farmer had gotten the horse for his daughter and she may have been allowed to run wild with the horse with total disregard! If this was the case, we could easily see how this kind of damage can be done to this horse. The farmer told our young rescuer that the girl lost interest.

The culture came back negative for any bacteria and the fistula has been opened, flushed and packed. This gave her some relief from pain. I wish there was a cure of the DSLDD. She will have to be watched closely for pain and the spreading of the DSLDD. It is impossible to know how long this mare can be with us. We hope to be able to give her a window of time to be well fed and be happy.



The Fistula on the withers
Before treatment

Why Horses Are Being Damaged!

I am still having a problem believing that this is not some kind of a giant joke. I really wish it were, but the sad truth is, it's not.

A mother and her 12-year-old daughter arrived at the sanctuary and were looking for a horse. I had not heard from them before they came, they just showed up. It quickly became apparent that they didn't know anything about horses. It was highly suggested to them by someone else to come to the sanctuary and learn some things before getting a horse. Robyn kindly helped the daughter learn how to put a halter on Eclipse. A short time later, I handed the daughter a halter and suggested she pick one of the 'barn hangers' to put the halter on. She didn't have a clue how to do that. Not one thing Robyn told her had gotten through.

We then learned that the parents had let this child pick out a horse on the Internet. Her choice was a 6-month-old Appaloosa colt in TX that is cryptorchid. (This condition requires an expensive surgery to remove the testicles and colts have died during this procedure.) The daughter showed me a picture of the colt and the mare. Obviously, he had not been weaned yet. There were no spots on the colt's white blanket or the mare's butt either. This is a genetic issue and the colt and mare will have night blindness. We tried to point out all of these faults and got nowhere with the mother. She told us that other people had already pointed out some of these things.

The next time they showed up, the mother told me that she had called the breeder in TX and had asked them about the night blindness. The mother was told, "It was not a problem." Would someone please explain to me what that means???

The third time they came, I asked the mother how the daughter was supposed to learn how to handle the young stud colt? She told me that her daughter was taking riding lessons. The mother wanted to know if I liked Clinton Anderson type training. I said, "How can it be a good thing to put a rope halter on a young horse with the knots set to hurt the sensitive nerves on his face? Then, you chase him around on a long line and scare him. How can this build trust and create a bond?" Next, the mother wanted to know what I thought of the horses ridden in western movies. That upset me so much that I could not even address something so ridiculous! I knew they would not come again since neither one seemed the least bit interested in learning.

I think that there is something in the food supply or water that make some people think they have *magical thinking* to be able to do anything without studying and learning how to do it first.

Our pathetic new seven year old mare is the end result of people who don't care to learn anything about horses. It is just all about what that person want to do and it destroyed the horse

Caring for Horses During Cold Weather

This information is geared mainly for North Carolina, but there is also helpful information for any other area that gets cold weather.

The state has varied areas from the coast to the mountains. The sanctuary is located about two-thirds of the way across the state, near Charlotte. Even in December this year, we had freezing cold weather. January is proving to be cold and snowy with some icy roads.

The ice is one of the big dangers for the horses. Empty the water tub to clean it and you will have an ice-skating rink by morning. We don't use salt here since it is not good for the environment, doesn't work when the temperature is too cold, and can pollute ground water. We have a propane burner we got from Lowes that we use for burning toxic weeds, so this could work well for some areas to melt the ice. What we like to do is to keep a pile of road base gravel and cover the ice with the gravel.

It is common sense to keep fresh water available at all times for the horses and other animals. Tub heaters should be in every water tub, connected to a GFI plug. The cost for a heater is only about \$20.00 to \$40.00 and a GFI plug is very easy to install and is important, as this ensures the animals will stay safe from electrocution. We were having an issue keeping water for the chickens, ducks and the dog in the freezing weather. Even the pond froze, so the ducks moved into the barns with the chickens.

Judy Smith brought us a bird bath water heater, which fit perfectly in a six-inch-high, black rubber feed tub and works great to keep the water thawed! (I had never heard of these.) Now the chickens, ducks and Turk have fresh water 24 hours a day. (Thank you Judy!) **Cont. to Page #4**



We are thankful for all of
YOU

Who are willing
to be our voice
and to care for us



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*In honor of our mother,
Betty Lentz, for her
birthday. We love you,
David and Kim*

*In honor of my wife, Alice
Bischoff. By Robert Bischoff*

In memory of Nugget.
By Missy Anderson

*"In memory of the gentle
Snickers." By Roberta*

IN MEMORY OF TERI
KALOR . BY CLARENCE
RASMUSSEN

In memory of my mother
"Tissie" Betts, who passed away
on Dec. 6th. She was always
touched by your charity, even
though she was somewhat
afraid of horses.
By J. Barry Betts

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Caring for Horses During Cold Weather *(Cont. from p2)*

Quality hay is the next important item in freezing weather. It ferments in the gut and helps to keep the horses warm. Horses should have all the hay they can eat, not just a rationing of hay. Quality grain feed adds the calories the horses need to not lose weight.

Salt and mineral blocks are just as important in the winter as in the summer. We add Redmond Minerals to their feed morning and evening all year around. This has helped to lessen the severe colics and help the horses to drink more water, regardless of the weather.

We are not fans of putting blankets on the horses. It helps just to keep their coats fluffed and not matted. It is so important that the horses and other animals can get out of the wind and under roof. If a horse is shivering, it needs to be dried and blanketed. Our beautiful Valentine Babies seemed to enjoy the cold snowy weather.



Happy Valentine's Day!