

# **A Survey of Animal Control Centers and The Unwanted Horse**

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May 15, 2009

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**Executive Summary**

H.R. 503 – Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2009 - has been proposed to amend the Horse Protection Act to prohibit the shipping, transporting, moving, delivering, receiving, possessing, purchasing, selling, or donation of horses and other equines to be slaughtered for human consumption, and for other purposes. The purpose of the legislation is to ban the processing of horses for human consumption. Often times horse neglect and abuse cases originate from a lack of economic resources needed to adequately maintain a horse's health. To date, no proposed state or federal law has addressed funding of care for unwanted horses, long-term placement of affected horses or established guidelines for standards of care at retirement and rescue facilities. Failing to address these core issues adversely affects the welfare of horses. The legislation does not take into account the unintended consequences should it pass. The care of abandoned or neglected animals whether they are companion animals (dogs and cats) or livestock (horses and cattle) is the ultimate responsibility of each county. Many facilities throughout the country do not have resources to house and care for horses.

A survey of 94 government supported animal control centers was conducted to identify and review resources available to care for unwanted horses within the districts of the 104 cosponsors of H.R. 503 as of March 11, 2009. Of those surveyed, 19.15% responded. The survey results show that up to 83% of shelters cannot house and care for any horses, others can only care for a limited number, only 6% of personnel are very well trained, facilities have budget limitations, and recently (within the last 12 months) there has been an increase in number of calls related to abandoned and neglected horses.

Of survey respondents:

1. Seventy-two percent (72%) were considered the primary animal control facility in the county.
2. Seventy-eight percent (78%) house and care for dogs and cats while far fewer, 17% house and care for horses.
3. Seventeen percent (17%) could care for only 10 or fewer horses.
4. Over the past six months, 6% were forced to turn away 11 to 20 horses due to budget limitations.
5. The average cost per day to keep a horse at a facility is \$16.75 per day; \$502 per month; \$6113.75 per year.
6. Over the past 12 months, 23% have experienced a higher or much higher increase in the number of calls related to abandoned and neglected horses.
7. When the lead administrator was asked how well trained their staff is in their capacity to house and care for horses only, 6% say they are very well trained.
8. Fifty-three percent (53%) acknowledge there are no rescue facilities for horses in the area.
9. When asked how horses are removed from their facility, only 28% said that they could successfully place a horse at a retirement, sanctuary, or rescue facility.
10. Only 7% have funds appropriated for future expansion to house and care for additional horses.
11. In order to improve facilities to accommodate (more) horses, 40% will need more than \$100,000.
12. While 57% have an established working relationship with a local equine veterinarian, 43% do not.
13. Responses came from the states of, California, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.

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<sup>1</sup> The Animal Welfare Council is a non-profit, tax exempt 501(C) (3) organization established for charitable and educational purposes. Membership includes organizations and business entities who are actively involved in caring for animals in recreation, entertainment, sport and industry. Correspondences: 6600 #D-451 Delmonico, Colorado Springs, CO 80919; 719-440-7255 [awc@animalwelfarecouncil.org](mailto:awc@animalwelfarecouncil.org) - <http://www.animalwelfarecouncil.org>

## Methodology

H.R. 503 had a total of 104 co-sponsors on March 11, 2009. Each representative's home district was investigated to find the primary animal control facility that is government supported in the area. Primary is defined as the government funded animal control facility located in the representative's district. Contact information for each facility was gathered. Of the 104 representative's districts, 94 facilities were identified meeting the criteria. A few representatives shared home districts and some districts had no shelters or facilities that were found.

A 24 question survey was compiled with the help of a survey expert from the University of Louisville's College of Business. The specific purpose and objective of the study, as well as the sponsor was omitted to avoid potential respondent bias. Detailed sender contact information was given in the introductory email to validate the survey is legitimate and not a junk email.

The survey was originally sent to the 94 shelters or facilities on April 29, 2009. The respondents were given seven days to respond before a second reminder email was sent which allowed an additional nine days. The survey closed on May 15, 2009, as scheduled.

The survey began with a question that verified the primary government supported animal shelter or facility in the area. Respondents had the option of giving the primary facility contact information if it was not them. All 24 questions could be completed regardless of whether or not they cared for horses. The benchmark or point of comparison for the survey is the other animals at the facility such as dogs and cats.

## Animal Welfare Council Survey Results

1. Of the survey respondents, 72% were considered the primary animal control facility in the county.
2. Of the facilities represented, 78% house and care for dogs and cats, while 17% house and care for horses.
3. When the respondents were asked about the extent of the problems encountered with housing and caring for horses, 6% had no problems, 6% had significant problems and 89% do not house horses at their facility.
4. Currently 17% of respondents care for 10 or fewer horses.
5. The number of horses to care for under respondent's current budget varied. Of respondents, 22% are unable to care for any horses, 6% can care for a maximum of 5 horses, 6% can care for 10 or less and 6% are able to care for a maximum of 30 horses.
6. Over the past 6 months, 6% of respondents were forced to turn away 11 to 20 horses due to budget limitations.
7. When the survey respondents were asked if they were to obtain a very significant funding grant, practically unlimited, including new buildings and additional staff to meet all the need of their community, how many horses would they need to house and care for annually? 11% would care for 1-5, 6% 21-30, 6% 31-50, 6% 51-70, and 6% 71- 100 horses.
8. When asked about their facilities standard of care for horses 6% are about average and 11% are well above average.
9. Of the survey respondents, 23% have experienced a higher or much higher increase in the number of calls related to abandoned and neglected horses.
10. The cost per day to house and care for a horse was \$6-\$10 for 6%, \$11-\$15 for 6%, \$16-\$20 for 6%, and \$26 or more for 6% of facilities. The average cost per day to keep a horse at a facility is \$16.75 per day; \$502 per month; \$6113.75 per year.
11. On average up to 12% of respondents' house horses at their facilities for two weeks to one month. The number of respondents that house horses for an average of 9 months at the facility is 6%.
12. When asked how well trained the lead administrator believes his staff is in their capacity to house and care for horses, 11% say they are moderately well trained.
13. Different types of horses require specific care and housing, 86% of respondents can care for Mares, 57% can care for Mares with foals, 57% can care for pregnant mares, 43% care for stallions, and 71% are able to care for foals.
14. Of the survey respondents, 53% acknowledge there are no rescue facilities for horses in the area.
15. When asked about the different ways that a horse is removed from a facility, only 28% of respondents said that they could successfully place a horse at a retirement, sanctuary, or rescue facility.
16. Only 7% of respondents have funds appropriated for future expansion to house and care for additional horses.
17. In order to improve facilities to accommodate (more) horses, 30% of respondents need \$100,001 to \$150,000.

18. Of the survey respondents, 54% have an established working relationship with a local equine veterinarian, while 43% do not.
19. When asked how familiar respondents are with the American Association of Equine Practitioners, "Care Guidelines for Equine Rescue and Retirement Facilities", 43% are not at all familiar.
20. & 21. The facilities that responded to the survey are from: Santa Barbara County and Santa Clara County, California; Palm Beach County and Miami-Dade County, Florida; Wabash County Indiana; Christian County, Kentucky; Worcester County, Massachusetts; Macomb County, Michigan; Pitt County, North Carolina; Greenville, South Carolina; Fort Bend County, and Potter County, Texas; and Alexandria and Virginia Beach, Virginia.
22. Twenty-nine percent (27%) believe that there are no facilities in the county that house and care for horses, while 43% do not know if there are any facilities in the county.
23. Thirty-eight percent (43%) of facilities have a full-time workforce of one to four employees, 33% have a part-time workforce of at least one employee and 60% rely on sixteen or more volunteers.
24. More than 14% of respondents indicated an annual budget of at least \$500,000, with 43% indicating a budget greater than \$1 million.