

FREE

Welfare Matters

EDITION 5

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Redwings Has a Wales of a Time

This November, Redwings brought a total of more than 30 horses and ponies into the Sanctuary from three separate rescue operations in Wales. On each trip, four horseboxes and a team of staff made the long journey from Norfolk to Wales to collect the equines, rising to the challenge of narrow hill roads and cold, dark working conditions!

The Welsh Assembly and regional authorities deserve recognition for the way they are embracing the new Animal Welfare Act. Each of the rescues Redwings was involved with during November had been instigated by local authority teams, whose powers have been significantly extended under the new legislation. The number of equines rescued as a result of the proactive local authority approach sends out a strong message to animal owners across the region that minimum welfare standards have been raised and are being taken seriously at governmental level. Redwings has pledged its support to Welsh equine welfare initiatives and to provide practical assistance when needed.

A group of 49 equines were originally seized by local authority inspectors in 2007 after being found shut in overcrowded pens and stables in the Wrexham area. The horses were in poor body condition and suffering from heavy worm burdens. The owner of the group was found guilty of offences under the Animal Welfare Act, but appealed three times against her sentence. It took almost a year for the case to finally be resolved and 14 of the equines were transferred from their temporary boarding homes into the permanent care of Redwings Horse Sanctuary.



A convoy of Redwings horse boxes was a familiar sight on Britain's roads this November



20 year old Trixie was just one of the 49 equines found suffering from chronic neglect at a site near Wrexham (left). Having been boarded and rehabilitated at a yard in Wales, Trixie is settling well into her permanent home here at Redwings (right)



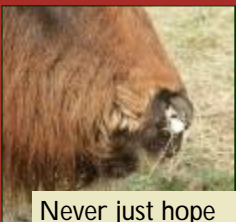
Two further collections of equines from Wales cannot be discussed in detail at this stage as the cases have not been fully resolved. We hope to be able to bring you more information about these rescues early in 2009.

Whilst consistent enforcement of legislation is vital, education is still the key to improving animal welfare standards without resorting to warrants and prosecutions. Wales is also investing in educational initiatives and has set up regional forums for discussion and dissemination of ideas. Redwings is delighted to be involved in the proactive approach being taken in Wales and hopes the benefits of their investment will reap real rewards for all animals in the region.



Getting to Grips With Strangles

'having a horse
with Strangles
should not have
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attached to it'



Never just hope that the snotty nose, persistent cough or swollen glands will go away by themselves.

As outbreaks of Strangles continue to afflict the equine community around the country, Redwings is working hard to share its knowledge and experience of Strangles to help people tackle this dreaded disease effectively.

When it comes to Strangles, knowledge really is power. Unfortunately there is still a high degree of misunderstanding and stigma surrounding the disease, both of which can prolong an outbreak and contribute to its spread. Redwings believes that if horse owners, yard managers and vets all know exactly how the disease works, they are in a much stronger position to deal with it.

Strangles is not linked with neglect or poor welfare standards and there is no reason to 'blame' an owner if their horse contracts the disease. One reason Strangles is subject to myth and misunderstanding is that an outbreak may be spread by a 'carrier', an equine who is harbouring active bacteria without showing symptoms of ill health themselves. This can make it virtually impossible to understand how an outbreak is being sustained if the carrier is not identified.

As with most natural processes, however, Strangles sticks rigidly to its own rules. Knowing what these rules are is the key to identifying, treating and containing a case of Strangles quickly and effectively and hopefully minimising the risks to other equines. Sadly, minimising these risks relies on open and honest communication between horse owners, whilst many in the equine world clearly still feel the need to 'hush up' an outbreak, or just crossing their fingers if they think a horse may have been exposed to the disease. Having a horse with Strangles should not have any stigma attached to it; not dealing with the disease in an informed, responsible and open manner most definitely should.

Want to Know More....?

Whether you don't feel you know enough about Strangles, or want to find out more about new developments such as blood tests and vaccinations, Redwings is here to help!

Redwings has recently held the first of a series of seminars about Strangles to try and address some of the fears and misconceptions about the disease. Three seminars held this Autumn (in Norfolk and Essex) have been warmly received by everyone who attended. More seminars are being planned for Spring 2009 and if you would be interested in attending or hosting a seminar, please get in touch with the welfare team on 01508 481008 or by emailing welfare@redwings.co.uk

Redwings has also produced a leaflet covering some basic facts about Strangles, how it is spread and a practical introduction to running successful quarantine. All our advice and information is derived from Redwings' own veterinary team, who have been running the charity's Strangles prevention program for more than 15 years. To download a copy of the leaflet, simply go to www.redwings.co.uk/welfare-lfts.htm and click on the Strangles cover image. Alternatively, contact the Redwings' welfare team via the telephone number or email address given above and they will be happy to post copies out to you or talk through any other aspects of the disease you may be concerned about.



Oliver Bounces Back

When the owner of horse out on loan went to check on her equine, she was shocked to discover that both her own horse, George, and his companion, Oliver, were in a really bad way. George's owner immediately arranged for her horse to be brought back into her own care and contacted the RSPCA. The Inspector arranged for veterinary assessment of the two equines and the examination revealed that George and Oliver were both severely underweight and infested with lice. Oliver also had a chronic respiratory condition which had been left untreated. The vet concluded that both horses had been suffering for several months and legal proceedings were begun against the family responsible for neglecting Oliver and George.

John, Sandra and Elizabeth Wain from Canwell, near Birmingham, each pleaded guilty to several charges under the Animal Welfare Act and the case was heard on October 28th 2008. The magistrates viewed the offences very seriously and all three defendants were given a suspended custodial sentence, community service order and a fine as well as being banned from keeping any animal for the rest of their lives.

Redwings, the RSPCA and George's owner were all delighted with the outcome of the hearing. RSPCA Inspector Tim Scott says he was "delighted that the magistrates took such a serious view of what was an extremely serious neglect case." Helen Glen, Equine Centre Manager at Oxhill, describes how poor Oliver was when he arrived at Redwings; "It was extremely upsetting to see Oliver when he came to us so underweight and lacklustre. After months of treatment for his breathing problems, which included an equine inhaler, and lots of TLC he is now a changed horse."

Very sadly, elderly George never recovered properly from his ordeal and had to be put to sleep earlier this year. His owner was devastated to lose him, but at least knew that he received all the care and love he needed in his final weeks and that justice had been served for the neglect that he and Oliver had suffered.



His Winter coat goes a long way to hiding just how thin 15 year old Oliver was when he was found



In the tender care of Redwings' team at Oxhill in Warwickshire, Oliver has blossomed into a happy, healthy chap and is a favourite with staff and visitors

Spindles Farm Trial Begins

The trial of Jamie Gray and members of his family, from Spindles Farm near Amersham, began on December 8th at Bicester Magistrates court. The Gray family are being prosecuted by the RSPCA for offences under the Animal Welfare Act relating to the discovery of more than 30 dead equines at their property back in January. Three more equines were euthanased at the site on humane grounds, whilst over 100 surviving horses, ponies and donkeys were removed to the care of charities across the country where they have since been boarded on behalf of the RSPCA.

Redwings' Head of Welfare Nicolas de Brauwere and welfare vet Roxane Kirton took leading roles in facilitating the removal of equines from Spindles Farm and are both due to give evidence at the trial. The hearing is expected to last until March and will be the biggest test of the recently introduced Animal Welfare Act so far.

Redwings will be keeping a close eye on all the proceedings as the case is heard and providing our supporters and the public with lots more information when the case concludes. In the meantime, Redwings is as busy as ever caring for the twenty one ponies and donkeys that came to the charity from Spindles Farm – not to mention the gorgeous foals they have had in our care!



Young Esther, who captured the public's imagination after her rescue in January

Safe Journeys

At Redwings we write time and again about horses that we have brought into the safety of the Sanctuary from all over Britain, but the challenge of actually moving each equine from one home to another should never be ignored.

Having travelled hundreds of horses, ponies, donkeys and mules over the years, many of whom have been elderly, ill, abused or completely wild, no one appreciates more than Redwings how important a safe, comfortable journey is to the welfare of equine passengers. Our experienced staff believe that Sanctuary care starts the minute the horse steps onto a Redwings' horsebox, not when they arrive at the other end.

Research has shown that even equines that seem quiet and relaxed when travelling, are often experiencing stress which can be detected in a raised heart rate, respiratory rate and release of the stress hormone cortisol.

All too often sadly, not enough thought and sensitivity is given to the loading and travelling of horses. This can often lead to a downward spiral of bad experiences for the horse, anxiety in anticipation of further bad experience and 'playing up' to avoid loading and travelling in the future. Although a small number of equines at Redwings do not recover from bad travelling experiences in their past, with patience and skill the vast majority of our residents can learn that travelling needn't be something to fear anymore.

To promote the importance of good loading and travelling practices, Redwings has produced a leaflet on the subject. Transport is a huge area and a leaflet can only scratch the surface, but we hope it gives some introductory food for thought on this important issue.

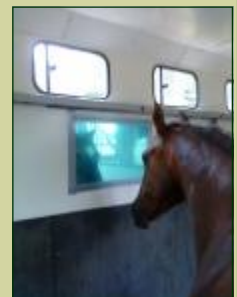


Time for Reflection...

Travelling is an unnatural experience for any equine, especially if it means being separated from companions. Even if your horse seems ok travelling alone, he may still be more stressed than you realise. Ideally, an equine should be travelled with the company of others, but if they have to be transported alone, research has shown that a stable mirror makes a big difference to reducing symptoms of stress such as heart rate and levels of cortisol. (Don't use mirrors with entire males and never use a glass mirror under any circumstances.)

For more info go to www.stable-mirrors.co.uk

This mare was known to get very stressed if she travelled alone and had hurt herself as a result in the past. But when Redwings collected her from Yorkshire, she was given a stable mirror which she gazed into all the way to Norfolk and no-one heard a peep from her!



Keep in Touch....

If you would like to receive each new edition of 'Welfare Matters' directly, please just send us your details! Use the form or jot them down and send to:
The Welfare Team, Redwings, Hapton, Norwich NR15 1SP.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Alternatively ring us on 01508 481008 or email us at externalwelfare@redwings.co.uk