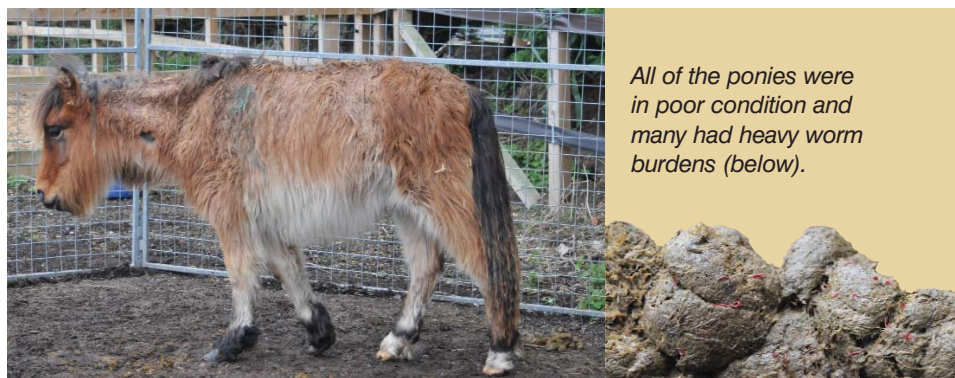


Ponies abandoned on Bodmin Moor



All of the ponies were in poor condition and many had heavy worm burdens (below).

Redwings recently assisted with the removal of 19 ponies from Bodmin Moor, in Cornwall, after concerns for their welfare grew. It seems the ponies were abandoned on the Moor, with no one coming forward to claim ownership. The situation draws a parallel with a warning issued by Redwings earlier in the year about the rise of UK abandonment cases.

The joint operation took place between Redwings, DEFRA, Trading Standards, Bristol-based charity Horseworld and the local community. Redwings sent eight staff, two horseboxes and a trailer to remove the ponies. Seven of the sickest ponies were too weak to travel to Norfolk, so they were transported to nearby Horseworld where their condition is steadily improving.

Redwings' Head of Welfare Nic de Brauwere MRCVS explains: "The ponies were underweight and suffering from various ailments including worms and lice. I am certain that at least four of those ponies would not have lived for more than a few days without our help."

Most of the ponies had a body condition score between 0 and 1 on arrival. However they are much brighter after only a few weeks of treatment in the care of Redwings. They have begun to show signs of normal behaviour such as mutual grooming and are eating hay with gusto!

We were asked to aid in the removal of the ponies due to our years of experience in the rescue of semi-feral ponies.

It was a challenging environment for the staff involved due to the condition of the ponies, but the operation went smoothly thanks to the co-operation of every agency involved and the invaluable support of the local community. *We received praise from government minister Jim Paice who said: "We would like to thank everyone involved for their help, particularly the commoners and the Bodmin Moor Interim Council... we would also like to thank Redwings, the horse sanctuary, for their experience and professionalism, both of which were indispensable in the successful removal of these animals."*

Inside this edition

COULD YOU COPE?

How to tackle
abandonment and
what you need to
know.

PLUS the facts
about **Sweet Itch...**
prevention and cure!



Incorporating Ada Cole
Memorial Stables

Please contact us at:

The Welfare Team
Redwings Horse Sanctuary
Hapton, Norwich, NR15 1SP, ring us
on 01508 481008 or email
externalwelfare@redwings.co.uk.

coping with an abandoned horse...

Abandonment cases are increasing. In December 2010, Redwings received over 60 abandonment reports, compared to only 16 in December the year before. Reports of horses straying on roads and owners dumping them on private or council land have increased. There have even been reports of owners joining livery yards with the sole intention of abandoning their horses.

Abandonment is illegal under the Animal Welfare Act (2006) and the Animals Act (1971). Most cases are a civil matter, so it is not under the jurisdiction of welfare charities. The information below is guidance only. You must seek legal advice from a solicitor if you find a horse abandoned on your land.

Stray Horses on the Road

Horses straying on the road are under the jurisdiction of the police. You need to report the horse to the police immediately. Their priority is to protect road users by preventing an accident, so they will find a safe place to put the horse while they try to locate the owner. To find the telephone number of your local force, go to www.police.uk.

Stray or Abandoned Horses on Non-Private Land

If you find horses straying on land that could be council-owned, such as woods, you need to contact the local council. You can find the number for your local council at www.direct.gov.uk. The council will have its own legislation for dealing with straying horses. If the land is unsecure, and there is a risk of the horse straying onto the road, contact the police as well.

If you think a horse has been abandoned on common land, you need to contact a commons official. Search the web to see if the area has a Verderer or a Commons Council. Common land is an area owned by an individual or a collective, such as the New Forest, where other people have certain traditional rights to graze animals.

'Fly Grazing'

'Fly grazing' is a growing problem in the UK. This is where owners graze horses on private land without the landowner's permission. The horses may not be abandoned. Somebody that does not have access to private land may own the horse, such as a member of a travelling community.

If your land is fly grazed, try placing an abandonment notice in a prominent place anyway. You may find that the



Annie (above) was found straying on a road.



Ponies abandoned at an office block

horses disappear as suddenly as they appeared. Read more about abandonment notices on the next page.

Report the situation to the police and the local council as fly grazing is illegal. Although the situation is an unwelcome one, it is the landowner's responsibility to provide for the horse's basic needs. In most cases, grass and water is enough.

It is not the responsibility of animal welfare organisations to deal with the matter. However, if the horse is in poor condition report the situation to the RSPCA.

You can apply for a possession order of the horse under part 55 of the Civil Procedure Rules. It can be time-consuming and expensive, but you can take out insurance against fly grazing to help cover the costs. Contact an insurance company such as NFU for advice.

Contact a solicitor that is knowledgeable in agricultural law for help. If you need advice on caring for the horse, you can contact Redwings or the RSPCA. Avoid fly grazing by using secure fencing and keeping gates locked.

Abandonment at a Livery Yard or Rented Field

Follow the steps opposite if a horse is abandoned at your yard or field. Owners may have abandoned their horse in this way because they want to try to secure a future for the horse. However, it is still illegal.

To prevent this situation, we advise livery yard owners to ask for some kind of bond from new clients. This could be several months' fees in advance. Make sure a new horse to the yard is microchipped and ask to see the horse's passport. This will deter anybody who has a stolen horse to abandon it at your yard.

Always draw up a contract between you and a client. Post the contract to the client so that you can confirm their address. Include abandonment in your client's contract. State that abandonment is an illegal offence where the owner could face prosecution. Include your intentions to re-home or euthanase the horse if the owner does not attend to it for a certain period.

If someone claiming to own the horse approaches you, ask to see the horse's passport, which he or she should have by law. It will contain a detailed description of the horse. A passport is not a legal proof of ownership, but it will help support their claim. If the owner does not have a passport, ask him or her to give an accurate description of the horse, or ask to see a photograph. If you have concerns that the person is fraudulent, contact the police for advice.

You are able to take legal responsibility for the horse if no owner comes forward in the defined period. You can legally sell, loan, euthanase, or keep the horse. Ask a solicitor for advice before making a decision, as you may have to sell the horse at open market. Contact DEFRA on 08459 335577 for advice about acquiring a passport for the horse. Legally, you cannot own or sell a horse without one.

Bear in mind that an owner could come forward months later. The horse could have been stolen and the owner has searched for it for some time. The abandoned horse could have been on loan, and the legal owner has only just traced it. If you have sold the horse, tell the new owner the circumstances. You should keep the money that you received for the horse for at least six months in case the original owner comes forward. If you cannot resolve the situation, then seek legal advice.

If you find an **abandoned** horse on your land...

An abandoned horse may be frightened, so approach it with caution. Follow the steps below to establish whether the horse is abandoned, or if it has just escaped from its home. It will also show that you have made every effort to resolve the situation, in case the owner challenges you later on. Keep a detailed record of your actions in a diary format and any costs you incur.

- 1 Offer fresh water to the horse. If it is possible, contain it in a place where it can graze safely.
- 2 See if the horse has a freemark. If so, make a note of it and contact **Farmkey on 0870 870 7107** or **Freemark LTD on 01295 690090**.
- 3 Look for signs that the horse is cared for. Is it shod, clipped, or has a trimmed mane and tail? The horse may have escaped from its usual field and the owner is looking for it.
- 4 If the horse looks underweight or elderly, DO NOT assume the animal is unwanted – but DO bear in mind that it may have been deliberately abandoned.
- 5 Have the horse scanned for a microchip. You can ask a vet to do this, or ask local livery yards if they have a microchip scanner. If the horse has a microchip, contact NED (the National Equine Database) or Petlog, who can search their records.
- 6 Contact the local police. If the horse has escaped, they may be aware. Ask for an incident number for future reference.
- 7 Report the abandonment to the RSPCA. They are not always able to get directly involved, but they may have relevant information. The RSPCA needs to be aware if the horse is in poor condition or has injuries.
- 8 Check www.stolenhorseregister.com, www.ukhorsewatch.org.uk, and www.nedonline.co.uk, for horses that have been stolen or gone missing while on loan.
- 9 If there is no sign of an owner, put up an abandonment notice for at least two weeks. You can download a template at www.redwings.co.uk/welfare. Make sure the notice is protected from the elements. The notice should state a contact number and address, a short description of the horse, and your intention to remove and permanently re-home the horse if no owner comes forward after 14 days. Display the notice prominently where you found the horse.
- 10 It is ok to move the horse to another address in order to meet its needs. Keep the horse out of touching distance of other horses to stop the spread of infectious diseases.
- 11 Put notices up in local shops, and inform local livery yards and riding schools. It is good practice to display another abandonment notice for seven days at the end of the 14-day period.

Sweet Itch

Prepare for Attack



The Facts:

Sweet Itch is an allergic reaction to midge bites.

Around 5% of horses suffer with the condition.

It compromises a horse's welfare physically and mentally.

It could be a genetic condition. Breeding from a sufferer is unwise.

Climate change means midges will start breeding earlier in the year.

April is *Sweet Itch Awareness month!* Prevention is better than cure, so prepare for a midge attack now, before the fly season gets into full swing.

You know how itchy a fleabite is.

You know not to scratch it, but the niggling itch is too great. Imagine you are covered in fleabites. You cannot get away from the fleas.

It makes you feel frustrated, agitated and uncomfortable.

A horse suffering the affects of Sweet Itch feels similar. The sufferer may scratch the affected area until it bleeds. The condition can affect the horse's temperament; an agitated horse is harder to handle on the ground and whilst riding.



Sweet Itch Symptoms

Your horse will suffer from intense itching. The itchy area will be sore and scabby, with little hair on it. The most commonly affected areas are the mane, top of the tail and across the withers. Broken skin is open to infection if it is not treated.

Plan for Attack

Prevention is your best weapon against Sweet Itch. Act early. Take preventative measures now before the midge season begins. It is hard work, but it is worth it. Your horse will be happier, so you will have a better relationship.

Assess your horse's environment. Is it a breeding ground for midges?

■ Midges breed near stagnant water. Remove your horse from areas close to ponds or streams. Clean water troughs regularly. Do not graze your horse on marshy land in the Summer months.

■ Midges breed near decaying muck heaps. Do not graze your horse close to a muckheap. Arrange to have the muckheap removed on a regular basis.

■ Remove itching stations! Put electric fencing close to fence posts to prevent the horse from scratching anywhere except for the ground.

Keep midges away from your horse

■ Midges are most active at dusk and dawn. Ensure your horse has access to a field shelter at these times of day. Put a bucket of water and hay in the shelter so that the horse can spend as much time in there as it wishes. You could stable your horse at these times of day, but be aware that stable walls provide the perfect scratching source. Avoid stabling your horse for long periods to prevent boredom.

■ Midges are not very good at flying! Redwings is lucky to have a centre close to the coast where the wind repels midges. You can recreate wind by fitting a fan to your horses' field shelter or stable!

■ Use a Sweet Itch blanket. They are made from breathable fabric through which midges cannot bite. Put the blanket on the horse before the fly season begins (*which can be as early as March*). Check underneath the blanket at least once a day. Fly fringes, masks and hoods will help too.

■ Use a strong insect repellent. Ask your vet for advice on what is the best for your horse, as your horse may be more sensitive to some than others. Remember to apply the repellent before riding. If it is not working, try something else.

You can apply creams such as 'sudocrem' or an Aloe Vera gel to soothe broken skin. However, they do not deter midge attacks. Prevention is better than allowing Sweet Itch to get to this stage, as it can take months and months for a sufferer to recover.

It takes time and effort to put preventative measures in place, but it is worth it. Call your vet for advice if preventative measures are not working. He or she may suggest a short course of steroids or other treatment. It could be that your horse is displaying similar symptoms to Sweet Itch, but has an allergy to something else.

Sweet Itch Awareness Month

Sweet Itch Awareness Month is a joint initiative between Janssen Animal Health, the British Horse Society, Redwings Horse Sanctuary and World Horse Welfare to show how distressing Sweet Itch can be, and how preventative measures can make a huge difference to a sufferer's welfare.