

## Redwings Assists in Northern Irish Rescue Operation



Late in November, police in Northern Ireland made a shocking discovery at a farm on Lisnevenagh Road, County Antrim. They found over 60 horses and donkeys in an advanced state of neglect and immediately called for help from specialist vets and animal welfare experts.

The group of equines were found living amongst nine horse carcasses, and four of the group were in such bad condition that they had to be euthanised on the spot. Redwings Head of Welfare and Senior Vet Nicolas de Brauwere was there to help remove the remaining equines. They were then placed in the care of a local Donkey Sanctuary centre and Crosskennan Lane Animal Sanctuary.

Investigating officer Sgt Alison Liddle said, "When police arrived at Lisnevenagh Road we were met with a truly heartbreaking scene. These animals were effectively starving to death in the most dire of conditions - there was no clean bedding, no water and nowhere for them to move around. Live animals were being forced to live

next to the rotting carcasses of other dead animals. No animal should be made to endure such horrendous cruelty.

Nic de Brauwere stated: "The conditions I witnessed in Antrim were as bad as anything I have seen in 20 years working in horse welfare. It was imperative that action was taken to protect the horses, ponies and donkeys from further suffering.

"I was overwhelmed to see how Alison and the other police officers went above and beyond the call of duty in their efforts to rescue these defenceless animals. Officers even provided a 24-hour guard at the farm to ensure the animals were protected from any further harm while we sought refuge for them. Crosskennan and The Donkey Sanctuary have now provided this safe haven and we are all extremely grateful to them. In this tough time of limited resources, it was really quite humbling to see this kind of dedication to animal welfare."

Redwings Welfare Vet Nicola Berryman went to County Antrim straight after the rescue to offer immediate support to the local charities - whose resources are being stretched by the sheer scale of the operation. Once they have begun to recover, Redwings will also assist by giving sanctuary and necessary care to a number of the rescued ponies. Keep an eye on our website and facebook group for news on their progress.

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CRIME:  
SIMPLE  
STEPS TO  
MINIMISE  
THE RISK TO  
YOUR HORSE**

**PLUS** abandonment figures triple. Is it just the economy that's to blame?



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.

# stay **secure** this winter

## Keep in the loop!

Sign up to your local Horsewatch group. Type your county and 'Horsewatch' into an internet search engine to find your local group. The UK Horsewatch Alliance is a collection of networks across the country, where members keep each other in the loop about equine crime in their local community. If there has been a spate of tack thefts or suspicious behaviour at a yard, Horsewatch members will be the first to know.

Many Horsewatch groups are associated with local security businesses who will offer discounts on products to the group's members. Moreover, many of the groups hold regular tack-marking days, where you can get all your horsey accessories security-stamped. Redwings is a member of our local Norfolk Horsewatch group and is kept regularly updated on equine crime news from around the county.

## Protect your land!

Cases of 'flygrazing' are rising by the day. You may wake up to find a number of new four-legged friends merrily grazing on your land without your permission. Do your best to prevent this happening by making sure all of your fencing is as sturdy as possible. Digging out ditches around the perimeter of your grazing, and then fencing them off to protect your horse, will deter anyone from driving a vehicle onto your land. Consider ploughing up unused pockets of land, or putting them to use. Unused land is more likely to attract illegal grazing.

## Microchip too...

As well as getting your horse freezemarked, get your horse microchipped too. Microchipping is a good way of identifying your horse, in case of theft or another misfortune such as your horse escaping from its field. A chip the size of a grain of rice is inserted into the horse's neck. It is a quick procedure, relatively painless, and reasonably cheap.

Each chip has its own unique identification code which is put onto a national database. The database will contain your contact details, so you can be easily informed if your horse is found after going missing or being stolen. It's really important to remember to update your details if you move house or change telephone number!

Microchips are harder to tamper with than freezemarks, although ruthless thieves have been known to attempt to dig them out. There was concern that a microchip is not a visible deterrent – but now you can get a discreet



## Freezemark your horse

Freezemarking is one of the best ways of protecting your horse from theft. Markers are placed on the horse's skin and held there for 30 seconds. It's not a painful process... The markers kill off pigmentation in the hair cells so that they grow back as white. Your horse is left with a unique four-digit code, which is entered into a database along with your contact details so you need to make sure your contact details are kept up to date!

Some freezemarking companies offer markings for trailers too. This is normally an adhesive sign that sticks onto the trailer, or a number is etched onto the axle. It is a unique code that is registered on a database to show that you are the owner of the trailer.

One downside is that freezemarks can be tampered with by thieves by changing letters or numbers – although this is very rare. Visibility is their strong point, making them an effective deterrent to thieves. If several horses on a yard need freezemarking, you may be able to get a discount for group bookings.

# er!

**In tough times like these, horse owners need to be extra vigilant against equine related crimes. On these pages you can find top tips to prevent crime against you this Winter – whether it's theft, illegal grazing, or anything else that may affect you and your horse.**

horseshoe-shaped brand called a 'micromark' to show that your horse is microchipped. However, the 'micromark' is not a well-recognized symbol yet. Signage around paddocks stating that your horse is microchipped may also work as a visible deterrent, but this is not a substitute for making sure fences are secure and gates are locked.

It is now law that all horses born after 2009 need a microchip, along with horses of any age that have not previously had a passport.

## Register with the National Equine Crime Database

The NECD is a service that aims to prevent equestrian theft by allowing members to list all of their valuable equestrian possessions online. You can list each possession's identifiable marks, such as the chassis number on a horsebox engine and your horse's microchip number, in case it is stolen. If an item is stolen, and the thief tries to sell it, a potential buyer can then search that identifiable mark for free on the NECD website. This prevents any potential buyers from purchasing stolen goods, giving thieves less incentive to steal in the first place.

Membership is free for one year and costs £10 each year thereafter. Members also get email and SMS crime alerts. If you sign up, be sure to keep your information up to date!

## Get on NED

The National Equine Database holds information for over a million horses in the UK that have passports. As a member, you can 'associate' yourself with a horse and add details to its NED record yourself (such as its freemark and microchip number). You can also put a contact number for yourself on the record.

If your horse is stolen, you can 'flag' it up on NED. NED features recently stolen horses on the front page of its website, so they are easily visible to anyone who visits the website. If a thief tries to sell the horse on, a potential buyer can check the horse's details on NED and can then contact you.



## More Top Tips

**There isn't enough room on these two pages to give you every top security tip we have to offer, but here are just a few...**

**Make sure the entrance to your yard is well-lit.**

**Think about the positioning of your hay store. Keep hay in an inaccessible place and as far away from roadsides as you can. Cut strings on bales of hay to make them harder for thieves to carry.**

**Inspect gates and fences closely to check for signs of tampering.**

**Loaning out your horse? Make sure you draw up a contract with the loaner and keep in touch regularly so the horse is not sold on without your permission.**

**If you are looking at buying a horse, check its details on NED and the Stolen Horse Register too.**

**Don't leave tack in horseboxes overnight.**

**Get your tack security-stamped with a leather punch.**

**Use a wheel clamp on your trailer, and a ground anchor too if you can.**

**Be vigilant! Look out for suspicious activity in and around your yard.**



# Room at the Inn?

## Numbers of Horses Abandoned Continues to Rise

In the Summer edition of Welfare Matters, we reported that over the last year we had seen an increase in the amount of abandoned horses reported to us. By November 2011 our figures showed that the amount of abandoned horses reported to us has tripled since 2009.

*In 2009, 160 were reported to our Welfare team as being abandoned and, in 2010, that figure had risen to 241. Between January and November 2011 the total number reported was 392 and is set to rise further before the year is out.*

We have also seen an increase in reports from the police and councils who are discovering horses straying on roads or dumped on council or private land. We believe that some people think abandoning their horse will secure it a place at a rescue centre, which sadly is not the case. Many rescue centres are full to bursting and simply cannot accommodate such large numbers of horses. Redwings is having to prioritise cases of advanced neglect and suffering as we are stretched to the limit.

The economic climate is contributing to this abandonment crisis. Firstly, it is now cheap and easy to get a horse. We have seen ponies sell for as little as £2.50 which makes it easy to buy one on a whim without thinking it through properly. The initial cost of a horse is irrelevant, as yearly care can cost upwards of £3000 – and this does not include emergency vets' fees.

A small number of abandonments are the result of desperate owners leaving their equine behind at a livery yard or on rented land. These cases may be inexperienced people ridding themselves of an expensive problem. We recommend that livery yard owners and those that are renting out land to horse owners take several months' fees upfront and make sure all new arrivals are microchipped. This could make it easier to trace ownership once a horse



*Amigo, an abandonment case who featured in the last Welfare Matters, looking much better...*

has been abandoned and deter people from abandoning their horse with you.

Redwings wants to send out two strong messages on the back of this increase. Firstly, breeders should think very carefully before producing foals and, secondly, that potential horse owners think about the costs and responsibilities involved with taking on a horse before they do so.

**If you or someone you know has had a horse abandoned on your land, you can look at our website for step-by-step advice on how to deal with this unwanted situation. Anyone struggling to care for their horse, or thinking about taking on a horse, is welcome to call our Welfare team for free advice on 01508 481008.**

### Keep in touch

If you would like to receive editions of **Welfare Matters** in future please complete the details (right), detach the form and send it to The Welfare Team, Redwings, Hapton, Norwich, NR15 1SP, ring us on 01508 481008 or email [externalwelfare@redwings.co.uk](mailto:externalwelfare@redwings.co.uk).

If you do not wish to be added to Redwings' general mailing list please tick here  Redwings **DOES NOT** share your details with any third party organisations.

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