

HABITAT FOR HORSES

P.O. Box 213
Hitchcock, TX 77563
1-866-434-5737



Adoption Policy
Revision Date: April 3, 2007

1.0 Policy

The adoption policy of Habitat for Horses, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as “HfH”) is designed to help ensure that all equines in the care of HfH are placed in suitable homes. The adopter of the equine must be at least 18 years of age with no history or criminal history of animal abuse or neglect.

Anyone who donates an equine to HfH is not eligible to adopt an equine within one year of the donation. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis. Anyone who adopts and subsequently returns an equine to HfH shall have any subsequent adoption applications reviewed and approved by HfH on a case-by-case basis.

An approved adoption application is valid for a period of one year from date of approval and can be applied to any subsequent equine the applicant would like to adopt. The application may also be applied toward fostering upon receipt of the signed Foster Home Contract.

2.0 Application Approval Process

The approval process begins upon receipt of the Adoption Application and fee. The Application will be reviewed to verify that the applicant meets the requirements of HfH and the references submitted will be verified, along with a criminal background check. Any applicant who does not meet property requirements, receive favorable references or does not pass a background check may have their application reviewed by the Board of Directors by request for final disposition.

After review and verification a volunteer inspector will be assigned to conduct the onsite inspection of the equine property. The inspector will verify that all animals on the property are properly cared for and the property is safe and clean for the equine to be adopted. If the equine will be boarded, the inspector will talk to the owner of the facility where the equine will be boarded and notify them that the equine will be owned by HfH for the two-year period of the Adoption Contract. If the adopter does not pay their boarding bill or in any way abandons the equine, HfH is to be notified immediately.

Please note: The Application requires that you list information on the following references:

- a. A licensed Equine Veterinarian (DVM).
- b. An Equine Professional, such as a farrier, equine trainer, riding instructor, stable manager, equine breeder, etc.

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3.0 Adoptive Home Standards Of Care

The following guidelines are applicable to general equine management practices and are required of all persons adopting an equine. While not comprehensive, they offer basic parameters for responsible equine ownership. The number of equines should never exceed the ability of the adopter to feed, care and shelter them properly. Such limits are dependent not only upon the physical health of the individual but also the financial ability to maintain proper management. In addition, any individual keeping equines must comply with all relevant state and local law.

3.1 General Management Practices

Various types of enclosure are available to confine equines, including, but not limited to: stalls, dry lots or pastures. In addition, equines shall be provided sufficient opportunity and space to exercise daily and have freedom of movement as necessary to reduce stress and maintain good physical condition. Space and provisions for exercise shall be appropriate for the age, condition and size of the equine.

Group pasturing of compatible equines to allow social interaction is encouraged. If equines are individually stalled, they must be able to make visual contact with other equines, unless otherwise directed by a veterinarian for the safety of the equine in question or other equines at the facility.

3.2 Facility Requirements

The following are requirements in order to foster an equine, however, all will be considered on a case-by-case basis:

- 1) **Pasture.** A minimum of half acre pasture per equine on the property. Exceptions may be made in those cases where the equine will be maintained at a boarding facility provided the equine, if stalled, is provided daily turnout of an adequate time and space.
- 2) **Shelter.** A recommended 12x12 foot stall per standard size equine in barn with turnout or pasture; or a three-sided run-in shelter with a recommended 12x12 feet per equine in pasture. Equines shall be provided with shelter that provides protection from extreme weather including but not limited to: prevailing wind, snow, sleet, rain, sun, and temperature extremes. Stalls and shelters shall be constructed to provide sufficient space for each equine to turn around, lie down, and move freely and to allow free air flow. Shelters may be constructed to have removable sides during the summer. All enclosures, stalls and/or shelters shall be kept in good repair and free of standing water, accumulated waste, sharp objects and debris. a) If the barn or shelter is metal, the exposed metal on the inside of the stall and/or shelter shall be covered with $\frac{3}{4}$ " -1" plywood or 2"x6" boards. There should be no exposed nails or other objects that could potentially cause injury to the equine.
- 3) **Water.** The foster shall provide troughs or individual water sources to provide adequate and clean water for all equines. All water receptacles shall be kept clean and free of hazardous contaminants and be positioned or affixed to minimize spillage. Use of defroster to prevent freezing in inclement weather is recommended.

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Equines that are being trained, worked, ridden or transported shall be provided water as often as necessary for their health and comfort. Frequency of watering shall take into consideration the age, condition and size of the equine, activity level and climatic conditions.

- 4) **Feed and Storage.** Equines shall receive at a minimum the equivalent of 3% of their body weight per day in high quality forage and grain. If natural forage is insufficient in quality or quantity, quality hay representative of choice grasses in the local area shall supplement the diet. Diet shall be planned with consideration for the age, condition, size, and activity level of the equine. If more than one animal is fed at the same place and time, it shall be the responsibility of the foster to ensure that each equine receives nutrition in sufficient quantity. If necessary, equines shall be separated to ensure each has access to adequate nutrition without interference from more dominant individuals. Individual feed buckets or pans should be provided for each equine. All storage and feeding receptacles shall be kept clean and free of contaminants, such as feces, mold, mildew, rodents and insects. Stored feed shall be kept in such a manner that equines cannot gain access to it.
- 5) **Fencing.** Fencing shall be of solid construction, without sharp edges and visible to equines; electric fencing is acceptable. The use of barbed wire fencing is unacceptable in any area of five or less acres or along any side of any area separating equines from one another. Use of electric wire may preclude the barbed wire provision. All t-posts shall be appropriately capped when used as cross fencing to separate pastures, along any fence line adjacent to another equine property or/and property that is less than five acres. Fencing shall be monitored on a regular basis to ensure its safety and effectiveness is maintained.
- 6) **Cattle Guards.** Cattle guards will not be permitted unless there is a gate separating the equines from the cattle guard or the equines do not have access to it.

4.0 Approval Procedures

After the equine property inspection has been successfully completed and the applicant's facilities have been approved, the Adoptions Coordinator or designee will notify the applicant that they are approved to adopt. At this time the applicant may request priority on a specific equine.

- 1) The adopter will be required to immediately notify HfH or Adoptions Coordinator of any change in mailing and/or equine property address, phone numbers, email, or any other contact information.
- 2) Approval applies only to the equine property that is initially inspected. If an adoptive home changes the location of the equine property an inspection of that property will be conducted.
- 3) If after approval the applicant becomes inactive in excessive of twelve months there will be a re-inspection of the property. If the applicant's membership has lapsed, the applicant will need to renew their membership at that time.

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- 4) If at any time the adopter fails to follow procedures or an equine's health declines, HfH has the authority to remove said equine from the property. On the day of the removal, notice of the removal of the equine/s will be given to the adopter stating the reason for the removal and, if warranted, the revocation of the adopter's approval status. If the reason for possible removal is medically related, adopter agrees that the organization may remove the horse to be examined by a licensed veterinarian for a determination of cause. Should such determination show medical deterioration be due to reasons other than neglect the equine will be returned to Adopter.

4.1 Placing An Equine Into An Approved Adoptive Home

Prior to being placed for adoption the equine will have a current negative Coggins certificate. An Equine Health Record will have been created by the foster home for the equine, which will list any special medical conditions, vaccinations, farrier and worming schedules, and current diet. Before the equine is adopted out it will be at a healthy weight unless the adopter has experience with rehabbing equines.

When placing an equine into an adoptive home, the following procedures will be followed:

- 1) HfH will set an adoption fee for the equine. This fee is subject to change as the equine progresses in training and may be reviewed periodically and adjusted higher or lower.
- 2) After the initial two-week period of an equine being listed as available for adoption or if the foster home does not wish to adopt the equine, the adoption will be open to other approved adopters.
- 3) Once an approved adopter makes a request to adopt the equine, the Adoption Coordinator and equine's foster home will review the adopters' capabilities and needs (both facilities and equine experience) to see whether there are any obvious reasons why the equine requested appears not to be a good match for the adopter. If equine is being adopted for riding purposes, the rider(s) as listed on the application should not weigh more than 20% of the equine's body weight including tack. If the match appears to be suitable, the adopter will have first priority on the requested equine. Subsequent approved adopters who request to adopt the same equine will be placed on a waiting list.
- 4) It is recommended, that the adopter arrange a meeting with the equine if it is to be ridden and/or driven. In order to retain the pending adoption status, the adopter must complete the visit at the foster home within two weeks of being contacted by the adoptions coordinator. It is recommended that the adopter and anyone else in the adopter's family who will be riding or driving the equine after adoption ride or drive the equine during this meeting. If the foster home, after watching the session, believes that the equine is an unsuitable match for the adoptive home, the Board of Directors will make a decision as to whether a second visit should be scheduled with other HfH members present or whether the adoption process should be stopped. If the equine is to be a companion animal only, a pre-arranged meeting will be at the option of the applicant.

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**Note: While HfH tries to evaluate each equine as best as possible, HfH cannot make a final recommendation on the suitability of an equine for any particular purpose. HfH highly recommends the adopter have a veterinarian evaluate any equine they wish to adopt. If adopting for a particular purpose or event, HfH also suggests a trainer or instructor meet the equine.*

- 5) If the foster home believes the equine is a suitable match for the adoptive home, the applicant is responsible for transporting the equine to its new home within two weeks of the visit. HfH must receive the adoption contract and adoption fee before the equine leaves the property of the foster home. The adopter and foster home will sign the contract. The adopter will receive a signed copy of the contract cosigned by an officer of the organization via US mail or email. No modifications will be allowed to the adoption contract or it will be considered invalid. Also, at the time of transport, the foster home must provide the Coggins certificate and Equine Health Record to the adopter.
- 6) If the foster home is willing, the adopter may board the equine at the foster home after the two-week period to move the adopted equine expires. HfH may provide a sample boarding contract that may be used between the two parties.
- 7) During this two week period, the adopter must provide HfH with the full adoption fee and the executed adoption contract, with no modifications.
- 8) If the adoption contract and fee have not been received within the two week period, the adoption will become null and void at the end of this two-week period and the equine is put back up for adoption.
- 9) If the adoption fee is paid by check and the check is returned due to insufficient funds, the adopter must remit within 48 hours a cashier's check or money order to cover the adoption fee and any processing fees. If the fee is not received within 48 hours the adoption will be come null and void and the equine will be returned to HfH.
- 10) During the two-year period from the adoption date on the contract, the equine will remain legally owned by HfH. During this time, follow ups will be conducted by a representative of HfH. The initial follow up will be conducted at the end of the first six months in adoptive care and continue every six months thereafter for the two-year period of the Adoption Contract. Under certain circumstances more frequent follow ups may occur at the discretion of HfH.
- 11) The adopter may return the equine to HfH for any reason. The adopter must complete and submit the Adopted Horse Relinquishment Form at the time the equine is returned. The adopter will be responsible for the cost of transporting the equine back to an approved foster home (if HfH must transport the horse), the cost of any veterinary work needed as a result of injuries or illnesses sustained in the adopter's home, and the cost of any other expenses by HfH as a result of the adopter's acts or omissions while in possession of the equine.
- 12) HfH will not reimburse the adoptive home for any expenses incurred by the equine while in the adoptive home. If asked, the adopter must hold the equine for a period of up to three weeks after relinquishment at no charge, or else HfH may deduct up to one month's boarding fees at a boarding stable or foster home of HfH's choosing from any refund. The refund may take four to six weeks to be processed and mailed to the adopter.

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- 13) Should the adopter decide that the equine is no longer wanted for any reason after the two-year period of this contract, Adopter understands that HfH has first option to take the equine back and attempt to place it with another adopter. The adopter will receive an equine donation form and the value placed on the equine by the adopter may be tax deductible.
- a) If the adopter returns the above-described equine within thirty (30) days from the date of the adoption contract, HfH agrees to a refund of the adoption fee minus a \$50 processing fee, the cost of transporting the equine to an approved foster home and/or cost of any veterinary work needed as result of injuries or illnesses sustained while in the adopter's possession.
 - b) If the adopter returns the above-described equine within a period of one year (12 months) from the date of the adoption contract, HfH agrees to a partial refund of half the adoption fee minus a \$50 processing fee, the cost of transporting the equine to an approved foster home and/or cost of any veterinary work needed as result of injuries or illnesses sustained while in the adopter's possession.

4.2 Breeding

No breeding of adopted equines is permissible. Studs shall be physically separated from pastured mares by a minimum of a ten foot buffer zone, constructed of adequate fencing at a minimum of six feet in height. Should an accidental breeding occur that is beyond the control of the adopter within the parameters defined above, the adopter must contact HfH immediately and ensure that preventative measures such as the administration of Lutalyse before the seventh month of pregnancy. Should a birth result from the accidental breeding, the adopter understands the foal is the property of HfH and will be turned over to HfH upon weaning. Should the Adopter wish to adopt the foal, they must follow proper adoption protocol.

NOTE: Adopter understands that if an equine is deliberately bred, HfH may repossess the equine and the resulting foal for breach of contract.

4.3 Farrier

The adopter shall ensure that the equine will receive hoof care and maintenance every six to eight weeks, or as directed by a veterinarian or farrier. An experienced person knowledgeable in standard farrier practice shall perform hoof care. Exceptions may be determined by veterinary or other expert consultation when such care is unnecessary or would endanger the equine in question and/or their caretaker(s), i.e., in the case of wild or untamed equines.

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4.4 **Financial Responsibilities**

Upon agreement to adopt an equine, the adopter takes full responsibility for all maintenance costs of the equine including boarding fees, grain, hay, paste wormer, farrier, and other usual and customary costs including veterinary expenses once in their care.

4.5 **Health Guidelines**

Equines shall maintain a body condition score of no less than 4 on the Henneke Body Condition Scoring Chart. Exceptions shall be made for equines under the regular veterinarian care for a medical condition. If the health of an equine in adoptive care is in decline and weight loss occurs, the adopter must immediately notify HfH of such circumstances.

4.6 **Humane Euthanasia**

The Euthanasia Policy is designed to determine under what conditions an equine in the care of HfH is to be euthanized and how that decision is to be reached. HfH Board of Directors will appoint the President and the President shall appoint four members to form the Board of Inquiry which will act as the voting and investigation board for all equine terminations and death from any cause while under the care of the Organization.

Only a licensed veterinarian may administer euthanasia, except in an extreme emergency when a veterinarian is not available. A veterinarian shall examine the carcass to verify, in writing, such immediate need. Carcass shall be disposed of in compliance with all relevant law. The adopter shall immediately notify the Organization of such euthanasia and provide a veterinary statement and record of the euthanasia.

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