

HorseNet Horse Rescue

A Non Profit Horse Rescue Organization
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Starting a Rescue: A Guide

First order of business would be to become incorporated. That is a nominal cost of about \$40 or so – and the paperwork is easy to fill out. Next you would have to really sit down and decide what service you want to offer. Are you going to be breed specific? Will you take only horses from Animal Control? Will you take “give-ups?” Where will these horses be housed – do you have a Vet that will help you on a regular basis? Are you going to offer lessons? Lease the horses? Allow breeding? Will you give up ownership of the horses donated? Are you going to actively go to auction or purchase horses? Any and all of these questions have to be attended to so you can focus and make your mission statement.

I would check with Animal Control in your area and find out what requirements and restrictions there are in your specific area for housing large animals. Are there restrictions per acre? Do they have fencing requirements, loafing shed requirements, etc. I'd make sure you have all the specifics worked out BEFORE you take any horses. It wouldn't do any good for you to take them in and then have Animal Control jumping on you for trying to do a good deed. If you do take in a horse that is on the skinny side, first thing to do is contact Animal Control so they know you just got the horse. Well meaning neighbors have called the officials on people trying to do the right thing. Many times they are just busy-bodies and don't know what they are talking about – it's just a pain to have the officials knocking at your door for something you didn't do. After they come out and see the horse – and understand (with your Vet's verification) that you just got the horse – that the horse is under a Vet's care and that you are doing what the horse needs to get better you shouldn't have any problems. Always remember – as irritating as they are – they are just doing their jobs. Then, there's always the nasty situation with liability insurance – and the cost.

After you have a place ready and you are ready to begin bringing in horses – then I would get the paperwork for non-profit 501c3 from the feds. It is about 1” thick – double sided and intimidating. When we filed ours out it was at a cost of \$500 just to file with no guarantees – I do not know what it is now. Do yourself a favor and get a good accountant. Make sure they are well versed in non-profits – they can make the application a breeze. They can also help you get your bookwork set up correctly so you can easily keep records that they want to see when you have your 5 year test. The Feds will give you a temporary number (if you are approved) – you have 5 years to make a go of it – making sure that your effort is public funded and not just a hobby on your end. At the end of 5 years you will have a 5 year test – showing the funds raised for the 5 years and they will make a determination based on those figures. If you pass, then you will get a permanent 501c3 non-profit number. Making it to the 5 year mark can be difficult and don't let anyone tell you that there's lots of money out there and it's easy for the picking – it's there, but difficult to get your hands on. Finding someone to help with writing grants is also difficult but very important for the long term success of your effort. You will find that you get lots of “lip service” but very few that will actually be true to their word and follow-through with helping.

I would also think seriously about how you are going to save money. Are you going to entertain the use of alternative therapies? Are you only going to use traditional medicine? Most of the horses we get – by the time they come to us – traditional medicine has failed terribly. By using alternatives – homeopathy, acupuncture, flower essences, massage, chiropractic, Reiki (energy healing) and animal communication we are able to reach many of the horses and help them along in their healing.

It can be a difficult road, but also a very rewarding journey. You can make many 4 legged friends – a few 2 legged ones along the way. Keeping your focus clear – never deviating from your mission statement will go a long way.

Good Luck in your endeavors.

Many soft knickers,
Elle & Equines at HorseNet