

## Don't Breed That Mare!

By Misti Seppi, Wasatch Humane

Before you decide to breed your mare please think twice. Utah has a very real problem with horse overpopulation. Those of us involved in the wonderful world of horses see it all too often. The once loved children's horse, the once brilliant competitor, the anticipated foal that didn't turn out exactly as planned, the dependable riding school horse, the 'dumb' horse that outsmarted his owner one too many times, the horse that received the worse end of a divorce; all of these horses and more find themselves homeless every day.

No breed is exempt. Wasatch Humane has taken in Quarter Horses, Paints, Tennessee Walking Horses, Missouri Foxotters, Thoroughbreds, Mustangs, Arabians, Morgans, Appaloosas, Trekkers, Haflingers, and a bunch of unknown ancestry.

I received a call last spring from the Sheriff's office in Box Elder County asking for help catching a mare and foal reported out on the desert by a railroad worker. By the time the sheriff had located the mare and foal it was too late. Both had died of dehydration and starvation. A call to the BLM confirmed that these were not wild horses, but domestic horses. Just as some people still drive out to the country and dump their dogs and cats, some people drive out to the desert and dump their horses. Wasatch Humane has several dumped horses in the program at any given time. Mustangs know how to survive in the wild, domestic horses do not. Dumping a domestic horse out on the range is usually a death sentence.

Right here in Utah; every week, horses are sold to feedlots to then be transported out of state for slaughter; every week at auction, horses are purchased by kill buyers to be transported out of state for slaughter. You might think that the horses sent to slaughter are the old, the lame, the untrainable, and grade horses. The reality of it is that many, if not most, are young, sound, smart, good looking, registered horses with a ton of potential. What a terrible waste to bring these horses into the world only to sell them for a couple hundred dollars for their flesh.

I have spoken to more than one horrified former owner who simply can't believe that their wonderful horse that they sold to a wonderful home, ended up near death, at a feed lot.

If you have room in your heart and home for another horse, rather than breeding your mare, give a good home to a horse already here. Right now there is a horse that is your perfect match, just waiting for you to find him. Why risk the health of your mare and contribute to a growing horse overpopulation problem, when you can be part of the solution? Think about how proud you will feel out on the trail this summer on your new best friend and when somebody compliments you on your horse you can say "I rescued him". We receive letters and emails daily, thanking us for finding somebody the perfect horse. The message usually contains the sentence, "I can't believe a horse like this was ever in rescue."

Foals are fun and there is nothing cuter than a new foal wobbling around. If you have to have a foal in your life, consider offering a home to a foal from a PMU rescue (byproducts of the Premarin industry) or feed lots in Utah and surrounding states. Just this week, we and dozens of other horse rescue organizations received a plea to help 33 horses and foals at a feed lot near

Loveland, Colorado. Many of the PMU foals are bred to be terrific sport horses. And because they are already born, you can pick the gender, you can pick the color, and you can feel good about the fact that one less horse went to slaughter because of you.

Those of us involved in horse rescue are doing everything we can to help Utah's horses. Please help us by not breeding your mare, and make horse adoption your first option.