

SWHP

The Horse Hospital

Newsletter of the Society for the Welfare of Horses and Ponies

◆ Winter 2010

STARSKY & HUTCH

At the beginning of July two yearling colts, were seen on Llanthony Mountain by passers-by. Fortunately, a farmer's wife and her daughter very kindly managed to coax the colts down to their farm, so that we were able to easily load them into our trailer. They were extremely weak, and in need of special care.

We took them in just before our Summer Open Day, and it was an opportunity for people to see the terrible state that so many of the horses and ponies arrive in. Starsky very nearly died, and it was only due to the dedicated care of our staff and the vets that he made it. When they arrived neither of them wanted to eat, which is always very worrying, but after we administered saline and live yoghurt, they gradually started to take an interest in food.

When a pony is very low, nature tells him that he mustn't lie down, as he won't be able to get up. Unfortunately, when the ponies arrive at Coxstone, with cosy beds of straw to lie down on, they relax: this is when the problems start.

Starsky had to be helped up for five weeks, and Hutch for almost as long. They were untouched when they came to us, so we had to get their confidence before we could put them in slings. With a sling a pony can walk about, eat and drink, but they aren't able to lie down during the night, so then during the day they can be released, or helped up if necessary.

Today they are a much happier sight, they have made wonderful progress and are turning out to be very pretty (and rather cheeky) boys.



Starsky & Hutch before (below) and after (above)



Rescue

One of the worst cases we have had to deal with this year was handled by Ann and James. We had a call on a Wednesday at 10.30 am from Hay on Wye reporting a foal on the side of a mountain in great distress. The car was packed with rugs, glucose, syringes, hot water, and a couple of bacon sandwiches (for the rescue team) and a small 4x4 set off. As we believed at that point that the foal was very little.

Arriving at the foot of the mountain at about 12.15 we were met by the girls who had reported the situation – the only people apart from ourselves who were prepared to help even though many others had seen this desperate sight. We then walked for a mile or so up a virtually vertical mountain, splitting up when we got close to try and find the foal through the jungle of bracken. When we finally found him, he was virtually motionless, and clearly close to death. His eyes and gums were checked, and finding that he was still alive we gave him a dose of glucose with a syringe. Then we were faced with the problem of getting him down the hill, made doubly problematic by the fact that his energy levels had picked up after the glucose and he was now thrashing around in a fit.

James shot back down the mountain, as he could now see a way to get the 4x4 up to the foal. We managed to get hold of a vet who was able to come out, and in the meantime we stayed with the foal, trying to comfort him, padding him out with rugs so that he didn't do himself more damage with the violent fits.

At about 3.30 the vet rang to say that he was at the bottom of the mountain and James went down again to pick him up whilst Ann stayed comforting the foal. The vet assessed the foal on arrival, and the news was not good – in his expert opinion the poor animal had either meningitis or tetanus, and there was no hope. The sad decision, one that we always dread, was made to put the foal out of his misery, which was of course done humanely and quickly. We would just like to thank the vets for their professional help without which the poor foal would have suffered considerably more.

Breeding

One of the most irresponsible elements of horse ownership, which costs the SWHP dearly, is the indiscriminate breeding of completely inappropriate, unwanted and ultimately uncared for horses and ponies. Our charity is often called in as a last resort to rescue a starving orphan foal, and sometimes even mare and foal, that have been completely neglected by the owners.

Breeding horses is an expensive business, particularly if we look to the immediate future with all feeds increasing in price, and with less money to buy it. It is a known fact that there are too many horses and ponies being bred and not enough places for them to go. The problem covers everything from racehorses to Shetland ponies: anybody thinking of breeding a foal needs to have a definite plan for its future.

Unfortunately the cost of gelding colts means that there are now many being cut illegally, which we know can end up disastrously: so many have become rigs as the second stone is often retained and out of reach from the man with the knife.

Of course, there is also the endless nonsense over horse passports; until people are prosecuted by the Trading

Standards none of the bad keepers are going to apply for them, which seems very unfair and expensive for the owners who have them. We shouldn't be agreeing to laws that we can't enforce, it makes a mockery of the whole system.

Part of the problem is that in many areas of the mountains stallions and colts are left out with mares to breed indiscriminately, are left to fend for themselves, often with great suffering, with no round ups or other form of control. One solution, or at least part solution would be to remove all stallions and colts from areas where they can cover mares.

The British Horse Society have launched a long-term campaign to encourage horse owners to 'Think Before You Breed' Their aim is to ensure that, through increased awareness and castration programmes, fewer poor quality foals are born and subjected to an uncertain, and often unpleasant, future. The BHS feel strongly that taking preventative action now is far better than waiting to pick up the pieces. If you would like to find out more about their campaign please contact Lee Hackett (Senior Executive, Welfare) on l.hackett@bhs.org.uk or 01926 707804



Five of the 10 foals taken in

Stop Press!

Ten foals abandoned on scrub land all needing veterinary care. It was sadly too late for one who had to be put down. The R.S.P.C.A. were involved but we were the only charity that would take them in. Now we are well over the limit for numbers at the centre and we would appreciate hearing from anyone who has grazing and care to give them once they are better. Please get in touch.

A Happier Outcome – Oliver

We received a call at 3pm on a Wednesday: an orphan foal had been found on Gelligaer common by a supporter who had been searching all morning for his mother but to no avail. James and Ann packed the car up with the usual rescue kit and set off on the long journey. Our local helper had managed to get the foal into one of her stables and he was lying in a corner weak and cold. He was the smallest Section A foal that we have ever seen – no bigger than a labrador.

We put him in the back of the car with rugs to keep him warm and safe. Ann travelled with him and he slept all the way back. As we were inundated with foals at Coxstone, helpers Katherine and Juliette took on the new arrival giving him 24/7 attention and feeding for the first couple of weeks, where he lived with their pet sheep. We decided to name him Oliver as he was very demanding about his feed!

We have had 5 successes with foals this Winter but also, unfortunately, 4 that didn't make it despite our greatest efforts. Which, we're afraid, only illustrates the terrible situation when animals are allowed to breed with no control. This has to be the worst year in our history for foals needing our help.



*Oliver before (below)
and after (above)*



Fundraising



It is going to be a very expensive year with everyone feeling the pinch. Our supporters have been so good over the years raising funds for us by having coffee mornings, cake sales, sponsored walks and silences etc. If you can think of any unique ways for us to raise more funds for the horses and ponies then please let us know. Equally if you'd like to do a little fundraising for us then we would be extremely grateful and let us know if we can help you at all.

Wendy Jones pictured far right with staff from a local kennels who raised money for us. Wendy Jones took on our charity for the year as her husband was the High Sheriff and she has been busy fundraising for us for which we are very grateful.

Success stories...



We featured both Mrs Tiggywinkle (bottom left and above left) and Martina (above and below) in our last newsletter and we are so pleased to say that they are thriving and have both recently gone out to new homes.



Miracle (above and right) was a desperate site when he arrived at the SWHP in the boot of a car; his mother a Shetland mare had died whilst giving birth to him and he could not stand up. He is another SWHP hand reared foal who against the odds is absolutely thriving and receiving Natural Horsemanship training to help his vivacious character.



Success stories...



Photo courtesy of
topshots.org.uk



We know we have featured Harvey before but he is doing so well and we thought you would like to see how fabulous he is. He is one of our hand-reared foals who was brought to us as his mother had died at just 10 days old. He is such a character. Now in a wonderful home with a great future ahead of him.

Basra dogs and cat update

Sandbag, Dirtbag and Royal are very happily homed they have been winning prizes in obedience classes. Hesco the cat is also very happy in her new home.

As costs continue to rise, please persuade a friend to become a supporter,

and so help us to help the increasing number of animals in need

Here (right) are our two new guard dogs who have replaced Nimrod. They were both in need of a new home.



Ragwort

Despite the fact that ragwort is spreading at an alarming rate, there still seems to be a complacency over this toxic weed. Although there have been efforts to make the general public aware of the dangers of this malevolent plant, notably by the donkey sanctuary and more recently the BHS, there still seems to be a remarkable degree of ignorance over this issue.

Alasdair had, in previous newsletters,



highlighted the dangers of ragwort, and at the risk of being boring and repetitive, we will continue to campaign

to eliminate, or at least control the spread of this killer plant.

We have also had reports of ragwort in hay; and so before making hay it is vital to check that this danger has been removed as discussed above. Recently we had to attend a case where we had to have a mare put down due to liver failure – several had already died and there were some others with severe liver damage; and as there was no ragwort in the field it was almost certainly due to ragwort in the hay.

Tyson



Tyson was taken in by the Society in June 2002. He was a three year old unhandled stallion who had been found on Gelligaer Mountain with a very bad large wound on his neck, which had developed into a nasty abscess. He fortunately recovered well and was castrated four months later. During his time at Coxstone we started handling him and preparing him to be a ridden pony, to go to his first home. He went to a lovely home for four years where he competed successfully at dressage and working hunter pony, winning many competitions. In his last year he suddenly developed very bad

breathing problems which baffled vets and to this day we do not know what caused it. His future was looking bleak and it was mutually agreed that he should come back to our centre for assessment, which we do with any of our horses or ponies that are in this type of situation.

With the change of air, scenery and six months off he started to pick up and we were thrilled that we felt him strong and well enough to be rehomed again. He has been in his current home for two years with a lovely family and we are so pleased that he is doing so well with his young rider. The picture tells the story.

This year's Christmas cards



Pack of 12 cards:
Father Christmas with Sebastian. One design.
£3.50 per pack plus 50p postage and packaging

Assorted pack of 12 cards:
Three snowy designs of SWHP horses and ponies. £3.50 per pack plus 50p postage and packaging

Dates for your diary

SATURDAY 13TH NOVEMBER

The Priory, Monmouth 10–12 Coffee Morning

SUNDAY 5TH DECEMBER

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS OPEN DAY AT THE SWHP HORSE HOSPITAL. 11am–3pm

FRIDAY 10TH – SUNDAY 12TH DECEMBER

A Sumptuous Christmas Flower Festival in the theme of A Child's Christmas held at the historic Tudor Manor – Llanvihangel Court, Llanvihangel Crucorney, nr. Abergavenny in conjunction with Abergavenny Flower Arranging Society.

For more details see our website – www.swhp.co.uk

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