

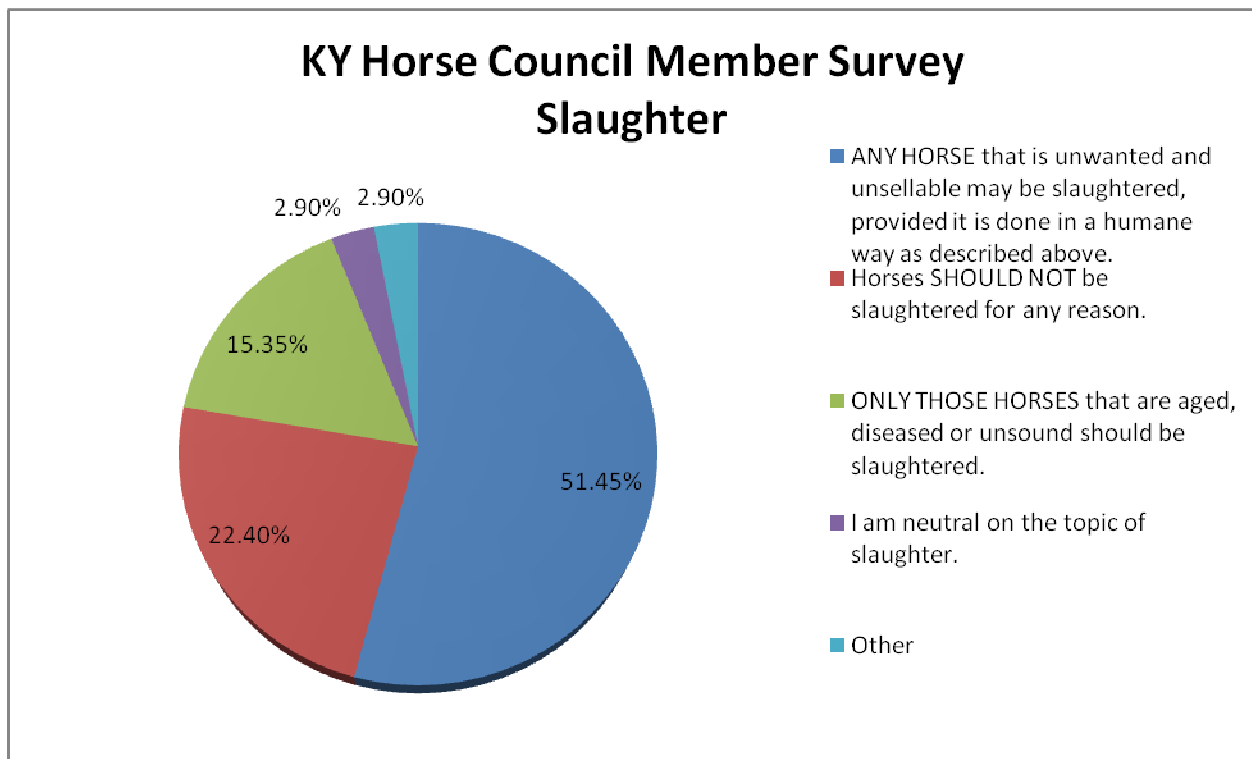
## **The Kentucky Horse Industry 2009 Update on Unwanted Horses**

Data Collected & Prepared by the Kentucky Horse Council, Inc.

## Introduction & Background Facts

Most of Kentucky suffered back-to-back droughts in 2007 and 2008. That, coupled with the increasingly poor economy, rising cost of feed, fuel, and fertilizer, and the cessation of horse processing in the US, created an increase in the number of neglected and unwanted horses.

In December 2008 the Kentucky Horse Council conducted a member survey about horse processing. There was a 36% return rate on the survey with the outcome that responding members were divided over the divisive issue of slaughter.

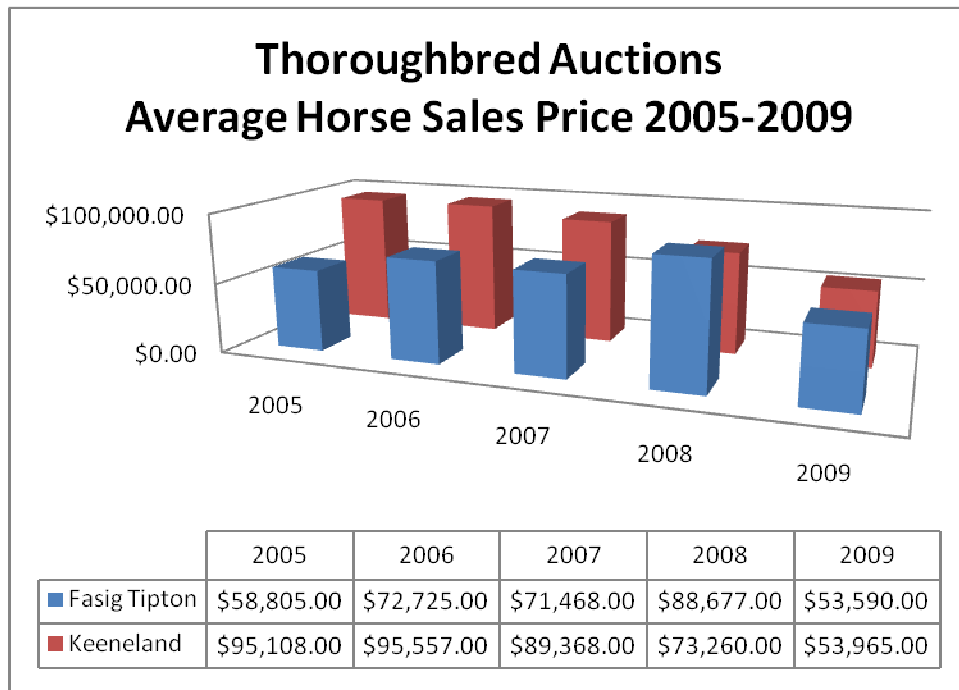


This report includes facts and figures obtained from Kentucky horse sales, county officials, rescue agencies, and the Kentucky Horse Council December 2007 through December 2009. It is important to note that the Commonwealth of Kentucky consists of 120 counties all with their own unique systems of tracking information about animal neglect and abuse cases. In addition Kentucky does not require licensure of rescue and shelter facilities.

## Kentucky Horse Sales

Five local stock yards advertising regular horse sales were contacted via telephone and asked for information about average horse sale prices 2005-2009. None of the sales facilities were able to provide data. They simply do not track horse sale price averages.

Sales data was available from two major Thoroughbred sales companies operating Kentucky auctions: Fasig Tipton and Keeneland. Both sales pavilions sell a variety of ages and training levels from weanling through 2 year old in training to brood mares.



## Equine Neglect & Cruelty Cases

There are 120 counties in Kentucky. Data on the number of equine related citations was obtained directly from 9 counties additional information was gleaned through a variety of contacts with another 19 counties.

- **Total number of Kentucky horses (28 reporting counties) whose owners were cited for neglect 2007-2009: 403**, expand this number to all 120 KY counties, the estimated number of neglected horses 2007-2009: 1680
- **Total number of Kentucky horse owners (6 reporting counties) cited for neglect 2005-2007: 1** *Note: It was difficult to obtain historical data as many of the animal control officers were only in the job a few years and were unable to locate information before their tenure.*

## Abandoned Kentucky Equines

There is a great deal of hearsay regarding large numbers of abandoned horses on old strip mines. Largely that information has not been verifiable. In many instances horse owners have long standing agreements to turn their horses out to graze the mines each winter.

There is a great deal of hearsay about abandoned horses being left at county stockyards but the Kentucky Horse Council has been unable to verify any instances because records of abandoned horses are not kept by the stockyards. However, the fiscal abandonment of horses at boarding facilities occurs regularly throughout Kentucky. Fiscally abandoned horses have not been included in this report.

The Kentucky Horse Council began requesting information on abandoned horses more than a year ago from members, the general public, and sheltering and enforcement agencies. Data on the number of equines found running at large (owner unknown) was obtained from 15 Kentucky counties.

- **Total number of Kentucky horses (15 reporting counties) running at large 2007-2009: 21**  
Expand this number to include all 120 KY counties, the estimated number of horses running at large 2007-2009: 168
- **Total number of Kentucky horses running at large (5 reporting counties) 2005-2006: 6**

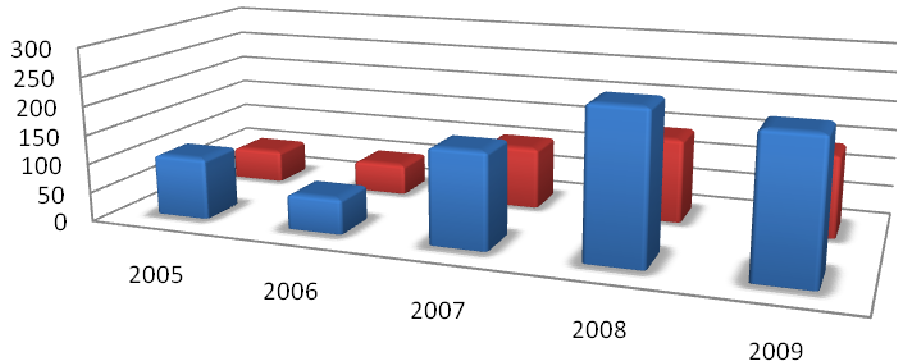
## Kentucky Equine Rescue Operations

There are 28 organizations known by the Kentucky Horse Council to be operating as equine rescue or retirement facilities in Kentucky. Eleven are 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations, seven work exclusively with Thoroughbred horses, and five provide lifetime care and retirement.

Rescue agencies were asked to provide data by year on the number of intakes and adoptions 2005-2009. Seven rescue agencies supplied information for this report including the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation (Kentucky estimates only), Second Stride, Kentucky Equine Humane Center (est. 2007), Buckland Equine Rescue (est. 2007), Mountain View Rescue (est. 2007), Harris Horse Rescue (est. 2009), and Second Chance Equine Rescue and Sanctuary (est. 2009).

Year	# of Reporting Rescues
2005	2
2006	2
2007	5
2008	5
2009	6

## Reported KY Equine Rescue Intakes & Adoptions 2005-2009



	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
■ Intakes	106	61	164	255	236
■ Adoptions	57	54	107	145	141

\*2009 Data incomplete – no estimates available from the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation

### Kentucky Horse Council Programs to Help At-Risk Horses

#### ORGANIZATION OF RESOURCES

##### **Equine Rescue Networking**

The Kentucky Horse Council arranges networking meetings for Kentucky equine rescue organizations. The first meeting March 25, 2008 had over 30 attendees from across the state. Educational sessions are offered at the rescue meetings. Rescues from around the state continue to meet regularly with the coordination of the Kentucky Horse Council.

Rescue networking was featured in:

- The Horse <http://www.thehorse.com/ViewArticle.aspx?ID=14935>

#### FUNDRAISING

##### **John Henry Memorial Adoption Fair**

The Kentucky Horse Park and the Kentucky Horse Council began partnering in 2008 to hold an Annual Adoption Fair for rescued horses. All Kentucky equine rescue agencies are invited to participate in the event with information tables featuring information about adoptable horses. Organizations with 501(c)(3) status may bring adoptable, sound, trainable horses which are presented during the event. During the

Adoption Fair live and silent auctions are conducted to support SoHo. More information about the Adoption Fair can be found online at <http://www.kentuckyhorse.org/adoption-fair/>.

The John Henry Memorial Adoption Fair was featured in:

- Horse Talk <http://www.horsetalk.co.nz/news/2009/07/077.shtml>

## **REPORTING**

### **Welfare Hotline**

In February 2008 the Kentucky Horse Council established a toll free Welfare Hotline. The hotline accepts calls from individuals reporting starving horses, looking for hay for their horses, requiring assistance feeding horses, and wanting to give up horses. The hotline accepted more than 400 calls since its inception. The Horse Council is transitioning away from the hotline and now has an online neglect reporting form at <http://www.kentuckyhorse.org/skinny-horse/> which allows concerned citizens to report neglected horses. Neglect complaints are referred to local authorities.

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

### **SoHo**

SoHo (Save our Horses) is a fund that was established in December 2007 which allows caring individuals and organizations to make tax deductible contributions to support the welfare of Kentucky horses. Initially callers to the welfare hotline were able to request assistance purchasing hay and SoHo paid for short term hay. Subsequently the Kentucky Horse Council only purchases hay for horses that are confiscated legally as part of a pending neglect case. Through the SoHo fund KHC also pays for coggins testing on horses destined for rescue facilities and transportation of horses to rescue facilities. More information about SoHo can be found online at <http://www.kentuckyhorse.org/soho/>.

The SoHo fund supports the direct costs of horse care through a variety of health & welfare programs, and the Kentucky Horse Council general fund underwrites all the administrative costs for these programs.

### **Equine Safety Net**

Equine Safety Net began in April 2007 and provides short-term feed for horses in instances when an owner experiences an injury or loss of job within the past 90 days. The program is designed to feed horses while the owner either recovers or makes alternative arrangements for their horse. Equine Safety Net provides feed for up to two horses for 30 days. More information about Equine Safety Net can be found online at <http://www.kentuckyhorse.org/safety-net/>.

### **Geld Voucher Program**

Low income horse owners may apply for geld vouchers of up to \$100 per horse (maximum of \$250 per family). Vouchers are paid directly to the servicing veterinarian after the castration is performed. Since July 2009 when the program began 28 horses have either been castrated or are slated for castration through the program. Information about the Geld Voucher program can be found online at <http://www.kentuckyhorse.org/geld/>.

Geld voucher was featured in:

- Journal Times [http://www.journal-times.com/local/local\\_story\\_212132630.html?keyword=secondarystory](http://www.journal-times.com/local/local_story_212132630.html?keyword=secondarystory)

## **Euthanasia Voucher**

Kentucky veterinarians can request a voucher to euthanize horses whose owners cannot afford the service. Euthanasia vouchers of \$50 per horse are paid directly to the servicing veterinarian after the euthanasia is complete. The horse owner is responsible for carcass disposal.

## **EDUCATION**

### **HorseSmarts: Essential Advice for Today's Horse Owner**

The Kentucky Horse Council recognizes that often new horse owners enter into ownership without the knowledge necessary to care for equines. Unfortunately this situation finds horses neglected through ignorance rather than intent.

A 60 minute award winning DVD that provides educational information designed for first time horse owners was created by KHC and released in April 2009. HorseSmarts: Essential Advice for Today's Horse Owner is given to all attendees of Livestock Investigation Training and available for purchase online at <http://www.kentuckyhorse.org/horsesmarts/>.

HorseSmarts was featured in, among others:

- Times Leader [http://www.timesleader.net/articles/stories/public/200904/28/41lf\\_news.html](http://www.timesleader.net/articles/stories/public/200904/28/41lf_news.html)
- Brownfield Ag News <http://brownfieldagnews.com/2009/07/04/a-new-dvd-for-horse-owners/>
- Horse Channel <http://www.horsechannel.com/horse-news/2009/08/10/kentucky-horse-council-dvd.aspx>

### **Livestock Investigation Training**

The Kentucky Horse Council began conducting **Equine Abuse Investigation Training** classes in 2008. Days End Farm Horse Rescue of Maryland contracted to provide the first training. All subsequent trainings have been implemented by the Kentucky Horse Council. The course is now called **Livestock Investigation Training** and offers a three day Level I and a three day Level II training. Eighty-six animal control and peace officers have attended the Level I training while seventeen attended the first Level II which was offered in 2009. Information about **Livestock Investigation Training** can be found online at <http://www.kentuckyhorse.org/equine-abuse/>.

In 2009 the Kentucky Horse Council also worked with the Kentucky Veterinary Medical Association (KVMA) and provided training at KVMA regional and state meetings on the role of the veterinarian in equine neglect cases. Information about **The Veterinarian's Role in Addressing Equine Neglect** can be found online at <http://www.kentuckyhorse.org/welfare-education/>.

**Identifying Equine Neglect** is a two hour seminar offered to the general public that includes information on using the Henneke Scale to identify body condition score, working with county officials, and the rehabilitation and re-feeding of neglected horses. The seminar is designed to help concerned citizens identify when they need to contact authorities about neglected horses and how to best support the investigation. Information about **Identifying Equine Neglect** can be found online at <http://www.kentuckyhorse.org/welfare-education/>.

Livestock Investigation Training was featured in, among others:

- New York Times [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/07/us/07horses.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/07/us/07horses.html?_r=2)
- Horse Talk <http://www.horsetalk.co.nz/news/2009/01/091.shtml>
- Equine Online <http://www.equineonline.net/horseforum/equestrian-news/12527-horse-council-offers-equine-abuse-investigation-course.html>

- Australian Horse <http://australianhorse.com.au/?p=28943>
- The Horse <http://www.thehorse.com/ViewArticle.aspx?ID=14557>

### **Minimum Standards for Equine Care in Kentucky**

An 8 page document was developed in 2009 which defined a minimum level of care appropriate for Kentucky horses. Minimum Standards for Equine Care in Kentucky incorporates photographs throughout to portray examples of proper horse care standards. The document is available online at <http://www.kentuckyhorse.org/standards-care/>. It is also provided to all Livestock Investigation Training attendees as an educational document for field use.

Minimum Standards were featured in, among others:

- The Horse <http://www.thehorse.com/ViewArticle.aspx?ID=14570>
- Equisearch [http://equisearch.com/equiwire\\_news/KHC\\_publishes\\_minimum\\_standards\\_of\\_care\\_072209/](http://equisearch.com/equiwire_news/KHC_publishes_minimum_standards_of_care_072209/)
- Horse Channel <http://www.horsechannel.com/horse-news/2009/08/21/minimum-standards-horse-care.aspx>

## **Programs Implemented by Rescue Agencies in Kentucky**

### **Hay Bank**

Two Kentucky hay banks are currently in operation and operated by equine rescue agencies. Buckland Equine Rescue began a hay bank in 2008 (information online at <http://www.bucklandequinerescue.org/PAGE%207%20THE%20NEWS%20PAGE.htm>). Mountain View Rescue recently started a hay bank as well. More information on the Mountain View Rescue hay bank can be found online at [http://www.mountainviewrescue.com/mvr\\_hay\\_bank\\_project.htm](http://www.mountainviewrescue.com/mvr_hay_bank_project.htm).

### **Stalls at Kentucky Racetracks**

The Kentucky Equine Humane Center accepts Thoroughbred horses directly from racetracks through a stall program. Horses may be left in a stall and surrendered at the racetrack. Transportation is made to the Equine Humane Center usually within 24-48 hours during which time volunteers feed, water, and care for the horses. More information about the program is available online at <http://www.kentuckyhorse.org/en/art/561/>.

## **Programs Implemented to Support Rescue Agencies in Kentucky**

### **Online Network**

An online network just for equine rescues both in Kentucky and across the nation as well as out to the global equine rescue community at large was created in 2009. It is free for all users and features: private and public groups, public and private discussions, classified ads, equine listings, blogs, connection to Face Book pages, and much more. <http://www.equineconnection.org>.

### **One Horse at a Time**

One Horse at a Time formed in 2008. They have a small fund from which they operate several assistance funds including Grandmother's Fund (for elderly horses), Wounded Warrior's Fund (for horses who have gone on despite tremendous injuries), Calvin's Ransom Fund (for babies in need), Second Chance Fund (for horses that will beat the odds), and a Gelding Fund. Rescue facilities can apply to One Horse at a Time directly for financial assistance. More information about One Horse at a Time can be found online at <http://www.onehorseatitime.org/>.

### **Conclusion**

Much is being done throughout the Commonwealth to address the increasing numbers of unwanted horses. Still there are many rural communities that struggle and fail to enforce existing neglect statutes because of a lack of manpower, education, facilities, and resources. Reports of neglected and starving horses continue to rise despite a good 2009 hay crop and record rainfall.

### **Recommendations to Improve the Outcome for Neglected Kentucky Horses**

Conditions could be improved for Kentucky's unwanted horses by implementing a variety of programs and partnerships including:

- Develop an industry and state partnership to provide:
  - Ongoing funding for education
  - Equine rescue support
  - Establishment of equine rescue and retirement standards
  - Financial assistance, etc.
- Require training for animal control officers and peace officers in identifying, investigating, and rehabilitating equine neglect victims
- Construct, staff, and run centralized holding facilities to house equines that are confiscated as part of a neglect case
- Employ and train regional veterinarians specializing in the identification and rehabilitation of neglected and starving horses