

Saving Sassy

This 30-something-year-old mare was doomed until South Carolina Awareness and Rescue for Equines intervened.

By Summer Best

The pictures would break your heart. They're scared. They're sometimes wild and sometimes sick. Old horses, young horses, and always skinny horses, when they're found.

And no one wants them. Or so it would seem.

The fate of many undernourished, neglected and sometimes abused horses throughout the country is a controversial issue. Should they be sent to a slaughterhouse? Should they be revitalized? Can they be nourished back to good health?

Thanks to equine rescue organizations such as South Carolina Awareness and Rescue for Equines (SCARE), many horses are given a chance to put on weight lost through neglect, and SCARE volunteers work diligently to place rescued horses into foster homes or permanent homes where they can resume normal lives. Medical and farrier attention is often needed.

"Sassy," a 30-something-year-old rescue mare, is living proof that success stories do exist. Last fall, SCARE volunteer Becky Bockoven of Travelers Rest, South Carolina, received a phone call about a very thin horse that was near her location, and she stumbled upon Sassy.

"Sassy belonged to people who meant well, but had no idea about her special needs," Becky says. "They had no horse knowledge when they purchased Sassy for their little girl, and apparently had no idea of Sassy's age. They had fixed a pen and shelter for her in their backyard and provided hay and sweet feed. Unfortunately, Sassy could not utilize these feeds, and was going progressively downhill. When we discussed with the owners the extent of the care Sassy needed, they decided to relinquish her."

For about a week, Sassy lived with Becky's four horses in Traveler's Rest, and she began a diet of Seminole Senior Formula.

"For the first three months, she was completely on Senior Formula, due to missing molars," Becky explains. "It was her complete diet, and we couldn't believe how quickly she gained weight."

Sassy was moved to a location in Anderson, South Carolina, where

caretaker Caroline Glenn could offer her many smalls meals each day. Slowly, Sassy has recovered.

“We are excited about the progress she has made already and hope by spring she will look even better,” Becky says. “Sassy has regained a zest for living and eats ‘like a horse.’ She now trots and even canters around her paddock. Her foster home says she is very adamant about regular feeding times! We hope this old girl still has some happy times ahead of her. We are glad to have Sassy as an example that an older horse can thrive if provided with appropriate feed and some extra ‘TLC.’ ”

Becky Bockoven is a member of the SCARE advisory board, and although she considers herself “just a gopher” when it comes to helping neglected horses, it’s obvious she’s a dedicated helper. She notes that through the SCARE program, volunteers work diligently to ensure horses are adopted by owners who can care for their needs. If a horse doesn’t work out with a new owner, SCARE will gladly take the horse back under its care.

Seminole Feed is proud to sponsor programs like SCARE (www.schorserescue.org). Seminole is a strong supporter of equine rescue organizations throughout the Southeast. Call 1-800-683-1881 or 352-732-4143 for more information.