



Introduction

There can be a great deal of factors that may result in needing to rehome a horse, such as outgrowing them, a change in personal circumstances or through equine or owner injury/illness. Sometimes it may be possible to explore opportunities that may relieve the situation, such as reducing expenditure or sharing the responsibilities with friends or family. However, if rehoming is required, each option available should be considered carefully to ensure the most appropriate outcome for both owner and the equine.

Retirement livery

For the retired or geriatric equine who can no longer be kept in the current situation, retirement livery may be a realistic option. Some livery yards may offer a retirement livery package, or others may purely specialise in providing this service to geriatric equines. Package details may vary, but will typically require no involvement from the owner on a daily basis and as a result, this can be quite a costly option.

As with all rehoming options, it's important to thoroughly inspect the establishment before making arrangements to ensure you're happy with the facilities and level of care your equine will receive.

However, before making this decision, it's important to consider if the equine will be fit to travel or whether it's the right decision to move an elderly equine due to the stress it might cause. In these instances, alternatives such as euthanasia might need to be considered.

Rehoming to a charity

Equine charities often receive requests from owners looking to rehome their equine, and all of these organisations will operate differently with their own admissions policies. A majority of the larger equine welfare charities are often working to capacity, where their priority is those equines who require emergency rescue to improve their welfare.

If a charity does offer a space for your equine, ask to visit and ensure they are a registered with the Charity Commission and also a member of the National Equine Welfare Council (NEWC); this will provide some reassurance that the equine will receive the care that they deserve.

For smaller rescues and sanctuaries, you may want to ask about their funding and financial plans to ensure your equine won't suffer due to poor management now or in the future, so it is best to do your due

diligence and explore the options available to you on a local and national scale in the best interests of your equine.

By rehoming your equine to a charity you can be safe in the knowledge that their health and welfare will be monitored for the rest of their life, with their best interests at heart. Rescues, sanctuaries and welfare organisations should request information about the equine's history, behaviour and traits to ensure they can provide the best possible care. The charity will ensure they receive any necessary medical attention and regular veterinary, farrier and dentistry check-ups, as well as potentially working on any behavioural issues to improve their treatment and wellbeing.

If the charity is open to the public, you may be able to visit your equine should you wish to maintain some form of relationship once they have been handed over. This may be possible even if they are not open to visitors, so you should discuss the possibility if this is something you would be interested in before deciding.

Selling or loaning your horse

It's important to remember that after selling your equine, you will have no say over their management,

welfare or their future. Loaning your equine will allow you to supervise activities and ultimately take control if needed.

If your horse is fit, healthy and well, you may be considering selling or putting your horse on loan. It will be more difficult to sell or loan an elderly horse or those with existing illnesses/conditions because they require a higher level of care; as a result, these are often sold on again quite quickly. Moreover, if you sell an equine who has an existing condition or injury, there is no guarantee that these will be respected and the equine managed accordingly.

To ensure that the person looking to take on the equine is genuine and responsible, thoroughly vetting the individual and the home where your equine will live will help to ensure your horse's future is secure and reduce the likelihood that they will end up in the wrong hands. You should encourage them to visit several times, question their knowledge and background, and ask for references. It will be telling if they are vague or refuse to provide the information you've requested.

When writing your advert, it's vital to be honest about all of the equine's information including any ailments or behavioural traits. This way it's more likely that genuinely interested people will come forward and reduce the chance that your equine's welfare will be compromised should they end up in the wrong hands. Furthermore, by ensuring the equine is up-to-date with all veterinary, farriery, dental treatment and their identification records (passport and microchip) are accurate, they are likely to be more attractive to potential buyers.

It's important to remember that once you have sold your equine, you will no longer have any say over their management or their future, whereas loaning the equine will allow you to supervise activities and ultimately take control if necessary. Keeping a record/receipt of the sale is strongly advised to protect you should complications occur.

An equine loan is usually long-term, however short-term loans – often with the view to buy – can be useful as a trial period to ensure the new home is suitable before a

sale is complete. A comprehensive loan agreement should be put in place which identifies roles and responsibilities of each party – copies should be signed and retained by both parties. A sample loan agreement developed by The British Horse Society can be used as a template and found on their website.

Euthanasia

There will be some circumstances where rehoming your equine isn't possible and the most appropriate way to secure the equine's future and prevent them from any unnecessary suffering is to have them humanely euthanised.

If an equine is particularly elderly or suffering from long-term medical conditions, it may be less stressful on the equine and also ensures that their level of care cannot be compromised.

If you are considering rehoming your equine and would like to speak to one of our experts for confidential, non-judgemental advice, please call our Welfare Hotline on 01427 787 369.

