

So you've rescued an American Saddlebred

By L.F. Lavery

So, you have decided to rescue an American Saddlebred Horse. Unlike most people who are only willing to embrace your run of the mill, gold fish, bird, kitten or puppy to watch, to talk to, to hold and cuddle, you have pulled out all the stops. You've gone for the gusto and made a very large commitment! I know money was probably not even a consideration for doing this noble deed but let's face it, a free horse is a free horse!

Now what the heck are you going to do?

Since you can't carry it home in a plastic bag, a box or a cage and it won't fit in your automobile, you might want to buy a horse trailer. This will also come in handy when you take your horse to the park for a walk. They come in thousands of variations. You should be able to get a good sturdy used trailer for under \$4000.00

When you get it home you are going to need a little more than some shredded newspaper and a cardboard box to house your new addition. In fact, you might need to build a new addition. 12ftx12ft is a very nice size stall for a horse and as it would be much more rustic than your home, I'm sure it would cost much less than \$125.00 a square foot to construct. I would think you could get a really "tricked out" stall for around \$5500.00.

You could, of course, opt for a boarding stable. Here you will receive the designation "Boarder" and share in the camaraderie with other so named horse persons. You'll drink strong coffee, eat mature doughnuts and what else, talk horses. Beside a stall, these stables also have other things you would not have to build at your place: arenas, fenced paddocks and pastures and usually an outdoor ring. If you find a good stable, they will feed your horse enough that there will be manure. They will have personnel and equipment to handle its rearrangement each day. (This is a big plus when it is too hot or too cold outside, in fact this is a major plus all year.) Figure around \$10.00 a day for a nice home away from home for your horse. Let's say \$275.00-\$400.00 per month.

We probably need to talk about the wonderful support team your new horse will have to have. The farrier comes to mind first. Every 4-6 weeks your horse's feet will need to be tended to by the farrier or horseshoer. (The term blacksmith is no longer "P.C.") This person could best be described as a manicurist on steroids that also does welding and a little carpentry work. Your horse's soundness and comfort depends on his regular visits. Depending on where you live and how much work he does, we could figure \$50.00 - \$75.00 per visit, he will need coffee and doughnuts as well.

Now, you'll need a "family doctor" or veterinarian for your horse. This doctor is indispensable for your horse's well being. He will visit your horse, examine him, if he has worms he will sell you medicine, if he has a chronic problem he will sell you medicine, if he has an infection he will sell you medicine etc. Additionally, he will test your horse and sell you medicine to keep your horse safe from the myriad of alphabet conditions that are waiting to attack your horse. WNV, EPM, VEE, EIA, SARS not to mention Coggins, Rabies are all things he understands and will take care of. He will charge for the visit as well. Put him down for about \$700.00 per year. He probably won't have time for coffee.

I must now warn you about the very biggest trap you can fall into. This sinister place is disguised as the perfect hang out for "boarders", a meeting place where you can ask questions and talk, what else, horses. They further bait the trap with the pleasing odor of new leather. Yes, I'm talking tack shop. Once started on supplies needed, you can spend thousands more dollars on products such as "horsy" breath mints to saddles made in Switzerland from matched African Blue ostrich skins and trimmed with Norwahl Whale Ivory rosettes. Visit here seldom.

Let me get serious now and to the point of this "novel". When we add all the dollars we have just mentioned, although they are somewhat inflated for effect, it still is an exorbitant amount of money you are willing to spend on this new addition. When all is said and done, what you have done and are willing to do, is PRICELESS. The absolute joy and satisfaction you will feel as you watch your horse pick up weight, become comfortable on those feet, shine as if his hair had been dusted with diamonds, develop trust in you and at the same time a personality, cannot be duplicated with a gold fish or any of those animals mentioned. Additionally, the thrill you will receive on the occasion of your first ride will be indescribable. I could go on and on but as you see the entire rescue experience is not only great for the horse, many of who have had none of the good things mentioned above, but it can be a life changing experience for you. I applaud you and the other rescuers who selflessly adopt these noble animals thus bringing them comfort, security, companionship, respect and, I am certain, pride.

Mr. Lavery is a nationally known Judge and a third generation American Saddlebred Trainer. He is currently engaged as a Horse Broker and Training Consultant for his business, "Ask the Trainer" and hosts a training question and answer forum on his web site www.AskTheTrainerOnline.com.