

## **Rescues – Separating the Good from the Bad: Facts and Flags.**

At first glance, your first impression of a 'rescue' is great. We all make the assumption that if a few people have come together to save a horse from a dire situation and give it a better life then these people must have the skills, experience and importantly the financial resources to 'rescue' this helpless animal. The unfortunate reality is there are rescue groups that are sadly lacking in all three of these areas. An example of the dis-service unqualified rescues pose, is the mishandled horse can be re-abused over and over. There is only a financial gain to that society. The horse is left with no voice/no gain.

Rescue groups run from both ends of the spectrum when it comes to professional care. There are many good rescue groups and individuals that are experienced horse people who are pragmatic and resourceful and do a fantastic job of helping the horses that so desperately need it.

"Sadvertising" methods used. Statements used to force adoption, especially for those hard to adopt (Examples: 'If you don't take this one, we will be forced to euthanize') Asking for donations after purchasing a horses from an auction. "I saved a horse at auction now need money for food and board" If the funds for care are not already available the horse has not been rescued.

### **FACTS**

#### **What is a Not-For-Profit?**

A not-for-profit organization registered under the provincial or federal Societies Act is similar to a for-profit or business corporation as it is considered to be a legal entity with an independent existence separate and distinct from its members.

If an organization becomes registered as a "charitable organization" with Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency it will be permitted to issue charitable tax receipts and will not pay tax on income. Not all not-for-profit groups are able to gain charitable status since this privilege is granted only to organizations that pursue the defined charitable causes of "relief of poverty, advancing education, advancing religion, and activities beneficial to the community as a whole."

Any organization which fails to benefit the community as a whole or has as their main purpose the promotion of a particular viewpoint could be denied charitable status.

A Not-For-Profit rescue Society, without charitable status, has several rules set out by the Government and explained thoroughly in the Society's Act

Any profit, gain or dividend generated by a Society cannot be distributed to any of its members.

Societies must have a Constitution or by-laws

Not all Societies are registered (anywhere). Not all Societies are registered to file income tax. Not all Societies are incorporated.

The Society Act provides that every Society must have a street address in British Columbia to which all communication, notices and court documents may be sent.

## FLAGS

Their adoption contract is unconstitutional. (Examples: they can come on your property with or without your permission)

- No person can demonstrate any former training or accountability to any other organization.
- Attendance to meetings is not welcomed, or invited, or meetings even announced.
- Poor stable management practices. (Examples: Manure not picked up, all horses in one pen (special needs or sick with healthier animals, etc.)
- Dangerous fencing (barbed wire, straight wire)
- Inadequate housing
- No history on animal or is incomplete, inadequate or not revealed.
- No professional assessments completed or recorded on animals received or adopted out.
- No Professional who is accountable and reputable who works consistently with the Society (i.e. trainer, veterinarian, farrier).
- No fixed address, or moves frequently.
- Constant change of members and directors.
- Financial records not open to public (upon request).
- Does not reveal how many times the animal has been adopted out/returned.
- Any statement that cannot be verified or backed up.

It is critically important have a close look at all adoption policies and contracts, and try to do this before you even look at a horse or surrender a horse to a rescue. You want to be unbiased and analytical as you evaluate the terms. If you have already picked the perfect horse it will be hard for you to make an objective decision.

Just because you are shown a contract, it does not mean you have to sign it or that it will hold up in court. The contract may not have even been written with legal counsel and may not hold reasonable expectations.

If you do not agree to a clause, there are options. Discuss your concerns with the rescue group representative and stay neutral and calm when expressing your viewpoint. If the changes are agreed to make sure they are put in writing. If some clauses seem to be intrusive ask questions and perhaps get further clarity in writing from a designated rescue representative.

You can also put a line through the unwanted clause and neatly write in what both parties agree to. They must then both initial the changes.

**Red Flag:** The rescue group claims their contract will not be altered. Know that they want a home for the horse, they should not be able to use intimidating phrases, i.e. 'If you don't agree to our terms, you can't adopt this horse'. If they do, be strong and move on, any organization that uses 'bully tactics' is unprofessional and should not benefit from your business.

Whether you are adopting or surrendering a horse, due diligence and thorough investigating is paramount to a successful outcome for you and the horses.

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