

Don't be Afraid to Adopt or Foster Older Horses

As I age, I worry about my horses and what would happen to them if I was gone. I will do my best to make good plans for them, but you know how life is. So when I saw older horses on the Minnesota Hooved Animal Rescue Foundation website (www.mnhoovedanimalrescue.org) I figured that it would be good to “pay it forward” and take in some older horses who had come upon some tough times. I am not young enough or brave enough to “fix” big issues but I am super good at giving care and respect and a safe environment to these older horses. So now I have 3 horses from MHARF living here.

The first was Fannie, a gaited mare. She looks almost exactly like our dearest Ruby we lost not long ago. She was surrendered to MHARF because her owner could no longer care for her (exactly what could happen to any of us.) I was fortunate to be able to talk to the previous owner and learn all about her skills and temperament, which was immensely helpful. She had a bout of laminitis the winter before I met her, so I was aware of that issue.



Last May we took her home and we had to work with her on picking up her feet—which was the ONLY thing she needed work on.

Otherwise she has been easy and sweet and very athletic for a 20+ mare. She loads in the trailer just fine, rides well, and loves being on the trail. Her gaiting needs some work but most gaited horses have been pushed too fast or are out of shape, so we are working on that. Most importantly, I loved her right away and successfully spoiled her. She is gorgeous inside and out. Needless to say, we adopted her!



Nutmeg came to our farm two months after we got Fannie. And yes, I told myself I was foolish with my money (I do have 5 horses of my own—two of which are over 24 years old). But by this time I was so enjoying seeing Fannie happy here I was sure TWO would be twice the enjoyment! Meg

(sometimes known as “Megatron”—don't ask me why) is a quarter horse mare who is 20+. She was rescued from some kind of breeding farm nightmare and had been pregnant way too often at her age (she thankfully had her last foal, a filly named Alice, shortly after the rescue took her in). MHARF didn't have a lot of information yet on her training level but a trainer had been on her and done walk, trot and canter in the arena and she had done just fine but hadn't had a chance to get her out on trails. I'm very cautious and



need a little more info than that before I hop on and go for a spin—so I took my time and had people lead us around the arena. It wasn't long before I was riding her on my own in the arena. Meg is a "rabicano" which is a color I was not familiar with before. She has little white spots here and there on her body, roan areas on the flanks and croup. She is also shimmering red on her neck and mane in the sun. She is very cool looking, and also petite and precious. Health-wise, she has mild navicular disease in one front foot. But I have a bad knee so I need to make



some allowances in my activity as well. We walk a lot and never trot on hard surfaces. She was a little rusty at steering at first, but slow, steady, gentle and forgiving exercises have brought us a long way. I now trust her riding outside of the arena. She used to paw when tied for tacking up, but I discovered she doesn't do this if she is ground tied. I had to



feel my way differently with her than I did with Fannie because I had no real knowledge of her training—but I could see her gentleness all along. She is as smooth as a gaited horse to ride. I just love her and we are having a grand time together. At this point she is still a foster horse and available for adoption.

Sassy, a Rocky Mountain mare in her late 20's, was the third one to come to our place. Holy cow!

What a fine girl she is! She was also surrendered to MHARF last year by an owner who could no longer keep her. I took her in because I felt I could give her a bit of a job and make her feel useful without being drilled or over ridden. I feel these animals have paid their dues and deserve a retirement that is not just standing around with no attention or love. She has only been with us since April 25th and we are still getting to know one another. I can already tell she is super smart. She is the chocolate color of Rocky Mountain Horses and she is also pretty short—but so am I! I hear she likes to lead on the trail which makes sense because her stride is huge.



Her only issue is thinking she must/needs to go really fast. We have been working on that and I tell her, "you can relax here and do just enough to feel good... not so much to hurt at your age." So yeah, this is another one I love.

I don't know how long I can do this, but for now, this year, today, I am very glad I took the gamble and welcomed these horses into our life here. I would be more than happy to talk to anyone who wants to hear more about taking on this act of kindness if they are at all feeling unsure. You can get my number by emailing MHARF at info@mnhoovedanimalrescue.org.

Happy horses make me happy. Maybe for you too? —Judy Walker