

Horse abuse case prompts training

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A horse abuse investigation in Crittenden County last week involving assistance from Caldwell County Animal Control Officer Abigail Tucker and Caldwell County Animal Rescue volunteers is being followed by a free local training session on how to recognize abuse and neglect here at home.

Shelly Price,
cofounder of

Speak Up For Horses, Inc., will present the program at 6 p.m. Monday at the fire training center on U.S. 62 West.



By Jared Nelson jnelson@timesleader.net

Caldwell County Animal Rescue volunteer Emily Nelson brushes one of four horses seized, along with a pony, from a Crittenden County residence on June 8. Crittenden County Sheriff's Department units called on local Animal Control Officer Abigail Tucker for assistance after discovering the emaciated animals. The horses have since been surrendered to the Kentucky Horse Council.

Price said the program, which has been presented around the state

for the past nine months, was designed to train animal control and law enforcement officers, as well as the general public, how to recognize signs of abuse and neglect in horses.

The symptoms may not be as visible as weight loss. Nutrition, parasites, hooves, and teeth can all be indicators of how well, or how poorly, a horse is being cared for, she said.

The training will also cover the basics of the Henneke Horse Body Condition Scoring System, a tool used by law enforcement agencies across the nation to decide whether intervention is necessary in a case of suspected abuse.

In some cases, Price noted, the issue is only the owner's lack of education in proper care, rather than a criminal violation.

Legal statutes regarding animal cruelty will also be discussed. The community is invited.

The training session comes on the heels of a June 8 investigation where Crittenden County sheriff's units charged a county woman, Melissa Robison, with four counts of second-degree cruelty to animals.

The sheriff's department contacted on Caldwell County Animal Rescue Animal Control Officer Abigail Tucker to assist after locating four horses and a pony in a small pen behind a residence on Ky. 70 near Frances.

The horses, investigators said, were in very poor condition — about 400 pounds underweight, with bones clearly visible. Some had hair loss, with sores and growths on their bodies.

Tucker called on Animal Rescue volunteer Jimmy Russell, who helped load the horses and transport them to a temporary shelter facility.

Robison has since entered a guilty plea and surrendered the horses to the Kentucky Horse Council. She was sentenced to 365 days in jail, probated for two years, plus fees and costs.

The horses, Russell said, will not be fully healthy for another three months.