

# Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue



## Foster Home Handbook

Headquartered in Esmont, VA

[www.feelbetterfarm.com](http://www.feelbetterfarm.com)

# Chapter 1: Introduction: Foster Home Q&A

What is Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue?

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Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue was formed in 2017 by Sarah and Jason Barwick. While our focus is on equids, we are not a species specific rescue and will provide care for any kind of livestock that we are able to.

Our goal is to rescue, rehabilitate, retrain and rehome those animals that we are able to. We also provide sanctuary for those animals unable to be rehomed and offer hospice care for animals nearing the end of their lives.

Our primary farm is located in Esmont, VA in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, however we house additional animals in a network of qualified foster homes.

We bring equine, livestock and farm animals into our rescue as space and financial constraints allow. We believe that all animals have an equal right to a quality life.

We require our foster animals be in an environment where they are interacted with daily.

Feel Better Farm's rehabilitation process begins the day an animal enters rescue with daily compassion, feed, care, veterinary attention, training and love. We believe there is no such thing as an unwanted animal, there are simply those that have not yet been matched to their perfect family.

## What do Equine foster homes do?

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Foster homes allow us to rescue homeless animals from a variety of situations by providing them with temporary care and shelter until they are adopted.

Foster homes are asked to provide foster animals with plenty of love, adequate food and water, shelter from the elements, and exercise. Administering medication may also be necessary.

In addition to providing the basics, foster homes may also be asked to transport foster horses to veterinary appointments or schedule on site farm calls at their home or facility, and assist with adoption events.

Depending on the individual agreement with each foster home, you may be reimbursed for supplies, such as supplements. Feel Better Farm covers veterinary and farrier costs incurred in the care of the animal, unless those veterinary costs were caused by negligence of the foster carer.

Foster homes play a crucial role in rehabilitating rescued animals. They are in a unique position to help abused or neglected animals learn how to love and trust again. Foster homes can help these animals become more “adoptable” by providing socialization and basic to advanced training. By teaching or re-teaching a horse how to trust and behave, foster homes help increase the odds for a smooth and successful transition into a permanent adoptive home.

So, what do foster homes do?

Any way you look at it, foster homes save lives.

## What are the requirements for becoming an Equine foster home?

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We are always on the lookout for more foster homes.

A Feel Better Farm foster facility should offer enough space for each equine on the property to roam freely and not be overcrowded, ideally 1 equine per acre. Additional general requirements are that you love animals and have the time and resources to provide a foster equine with adequate care.

We require all equine foster homes that are new to horses to attend a basic horsemanship class, and may set up supplemental training with our rescue trainer so proper handling techniques can be assured.

Fencing must be a minimum of 4 feet high, and cannot have more than 1 strand of barbed wire.

Other requirements will vary depending upon the specific needs of a given foster animal. Some animals, for example, will need a dedicated stall, dry lot or extra time commitments (as is the case with an emaciated or sick equine), isolation from other equines, etc.

We make every effort to match foster homes with an appropriate foster animal.

## Quick Fostering FAQ

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Q. I think my foster horse needs to see a vet, what do I do?

*A. If it is not a life threatening emergency, let your coordinator know, and she will schedule your appointment for you, or advise you if it is determined an appointment is not needed. If it is an emergency, call your vet and then let us know.*

Q. What am I required to provide for my foster?

*A. In a nutshell, basic needs including feed, forage, shelter and water, plus TLC and emotional support. In some pre-arranged cases we are able to assist with forage and feed. The key to having the rescue cover expenses is making sure they are PRE-APPROVED.*

Q. Can I have my farrier trim my foster horse?

*A. Yes, but we will only reimburse \$35 per trim, as that is what our farrier charges. If you use our farrier we have an account, and you will not have to pay at time of service for your foster horse's trim.*

Q. Are there specific feeds I should choose from?

*A. We are happy to work with you on your feed choice. We generally work with Nutrena, Purina, and Pro-Elite. We do not allow generic sweet feeds to be fed to equids.*

*In addition, certain feeding supplements and forages such as beet pulp, alfalfa pellets, and alfalfa cubes if fed must be fed soaked to a mash for safety.*

Q. How much support will I receive?

*A. You will have a dedicated foster coordinator who will check in with you periodically. They will ask you for your needs in relation to farrier, feed, and anything else you need. You will be asked to provide any needed updates to your foster horse's biography and photos. We do ask that every foster provide an updated photo of each horse at a minimum of once every 2 weeks.*

## What kinds of animals need foster care?

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Animals needing foster care covered by this handbook include horses, mules, donkeys, ponies, and mini horses, but much of the basic information applies to other foster animals as well.

Foster homes are needed for other species like goats, pigs, sheep and cattle, adults, babies, moms with newborns, and orphaned newborns, and sometimes small animals like dogs, cats, rabbits etc.

Foster homes are also needed for animals who are ill and/or need medical care. Many foster homes choose to specialize in fostering a specific kind of animal, while others choose to foster whatever animal is in need.

We come by animals in need of foster care via rescues from neglect seizures/surrenders and auctions, though Feel Better Farm may additionally aid animals that come through owner surrender, abuse cases, abandonment cases, and animals that come to us through animal control facilities.

Horses usually need help with training and sometimes need a refresher course under saddle. All foster animals will need plenty of love and reassurance that humans are not to be feared.

## How long do animals spend in foster care?

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The time an animal needs to spend in foster care ranges from one night to several months. Any time commitment a foster home can make is desperately needed and appreciated. At Feel Better Farm we have various classifications for equine foster homes:

**Emergency/Weekend:** Will foster an animal for 1 day to a week in order to help in a crisis or save an animal from euthanasia

**Vacation:** Visits an existing foster farm daily to care for an animal for 1 week up to 3 weeks while a standard foster family is on vacation, travelling, or needs respite.

**Standard:** Accepts a foster equine from the time it enters foster till the time it is adopted.

**Sanctuary/Long Term:** Accepts a special needs foster equine with the understanding that the foster animal may live in the foster home for the duration of its natural life. Sanctuary foster placement is common for senior animals over the age of 25 or those with health issues such as Navicular disease, heaves, etc.

**Maternity:** Foster home for a pregnant animal. This type of foster home assists with foaling under the direction of a rescue veterinarian, and fosters mom and foal until the baby is weaned and adopted. Safe Harbor Equine and Livestock Sanctuary does not believe in early weaning, and feels that under normal circumstances, foals should wean naturally at 4 to 6 months of age.

**Orphan:** An orphan foster home accepts orphaned infants and will bottle feed and provide all care until the babies are mature enough to go to new homes. We acknowledge that with equidae this is a phenomenal task that requires unique and special dedication.

**Stallion:** Many times the equidae we receive through neglect cases are still intact studs. It is our policy to geld stallions and jacks as soon as they are healthy enough. A stallion foster home is able to accept these intact males, keep them separated from females, and each other if needed, until they can be gelded, and pastured long enough for their fertility to be gone.

Any foster home can be a mix of the classifications listed above. In all cases, foster homes are never stuck with an animal that is not a good fit. We will find an alternative foster placement.

## How do foster animals find permanent adoptive homes?

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Feel Better Farm takes full responsibility for finding permanent adoptive homes for foster animals.

Foster homes are encouraged to let people know that their foster animals are available for adoption, but any person interested in adopting an animal needs to contact Feel Better Farm in order to proceed with completing the adoption application procedure.

Feel Better Farm networks our animals on social media and by word of mouth.

We invite foster families to attend any events to provide information to potential adopters.

Adoptions are handled on a case-by-case basis and every effort is made to match animals with homes that meet their specific needs. Foster homes can help immensely in this process by providing information regarding an animal's personality, training, time requirements and other needs. Any input given by a foster home is appreciated and taken into consideration during the adoption process. A foster home will ALWAYS have the final word on an adoption as you will know these animals better than anyone else.

Foster homes have first right of refusal on adoption. This means that if you fall in love with your foster animal, you can adopt.

You are not required to allow another adopter to take your foster animal. If you do not feel that the potential adopter is a good fit, your word is the final word. We will never expect you to allow an animal that you have cared for to go to a home that you are not comfortable with

**Adoption Policies** Feel Better Farm has the following guidelines for placing a horse into a responsible home:

- Only horses that are not in need of extensive medical attention will be released for adoption
- Horses will only be adopted to, or with the written consent of, adults of legal age to be used as pleasure horses. No horse will be used on the rodeo circuit or for horse racing, or for breeding.
- Because a commitment to responsible horse ownership is a decision no one can make for another, no horse will be released for adoption as a gift for another person (with exception of a parent adopting a horse for a child in which the parent shall remain the responsible party).
- Feel Better Farm will inspect the new owner's home and facilities before the final adoption takes place. This is to insure adequate housing is available. Adequate housing must consist of a barn, run-in, lean to etc., that will provide for protection from the elements, and a place the horse can be kept up to allow them to become accustomed to other horses or for medical treatment. Also inspection of surroundings will also be noted to ensure there is no danger from injury due to foreign objects or inadequate fencing.
- All male horses must be gelded by a licensed veterinarian before placement or within a time frame made by attending veterinarian.
- Mares will not be allowed to be bred to further the over population of unwanted horses. If mares come to Feel Better Farm already pregnant, the off-spring will become the property Feel Better Farm, with the mare's adopter having first option to adopt the foal.
- A Horse will not be adopted without a current Coggins test, shots and health inspection from a certified veterinarian. It will be de-wormed and started on a de-worming program. A trained farrier will inspect its hooves and proper attention will be given as needed.

- Feel Better Farm will track all adopted animals. We will inspect the care and up keep of each horse throughout the year without prior notice. If at such a time a Feel Better Farm agent feels this animal is not receiving proper care or treatment the adopter will have the option to fix the problem or this horse will be pulled and put back up for adoption.
- All Feel Better Farm animals will be fitted with a microchip before they are adopted into a new home.
- No horse will be allowed to be sold, traded, or disposed of in any fashion after adoption without written consent from Feel Better Farm. Horses must remain within the continental United States and Feel Better Farm must be notified of any change of address for more than 30 days.
- Adopters are not allowed to breed, dispose of any animal through public auction, to a known horse trader or for slaughter.
- Feel Better Farm will charge a minimum fee of \$100.00, and a maximum \$2,500 adoption fee for all horses. Feel Better Farm has the right to waive or lower this fee at its discretion. There will be no fee to foster a horse until placement. 'Foster Fails' will not be charged an adoption fee.
- If space is available Feel Better Farm may take in horses from owners who relinquish ownership. A \$200 donation will also be requested to help care for the animal while an adopter is found.
- Feel Better Farm reserves the right to refuse adoption to any person unable or unwilling to comply with these guidelines.
- No mares adopted through Feel Better Farm are allowed to be housed at any facility that also houses a stallion to prevent accidental breeding.

## Social Media Policy

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As a caretaker for Feel Better Farm animals you will no doubt take photos for yourself and to share on your social media pages. We DO allow this, and in fact encourage it and ask that you tag us as appropriate. Such pictures can serve as your required update pictures. As a foster home though, you do waive your intellectual property ownership rights to any photos that do show your Feel Better Farm animal. These photos may be used in marketing materials, social media and in any other way that furthers our mission.

In some situations animals that come to us MAY have legal reasons why photos cannot be posted. We will notify you as a foster farm if this is the case for your foster, and in such cases we ask that you send photo updates as described in your foster agreement by email to Feel Better Farm. These updates should not be posted on any social media sites.

## Our Positions on Equine Issues

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The mission of Feel Better Farm includes advocacy for animal welfare. For this reason, we feel our stand on equine issues is an important consideration for our foster families. It is important to us that our foster families are communicating the same message on equine welfare that we are. Together, we can be a unified front to advocate for all animals, as well as the ones in our care. For more information on the issues below, please see the advocacy pages on our website.

### **Horse Slaughter**

It is the policy of Feel Better Farm to be opposed to the slaughter of horses for human consumption. Feel Better Farm does not agree with the senseless and cruel act of killing horses by inhumane means that will then be packaged and sent overseas for human consumption. In an effort to raise awareness of this senseless act, Feel Better Farm will continue to educate the public of this cruel and inhumane practice.

### **Soring**

The Tennessee Walking Horse is the official State horse of Tennessee. The Tennessee Walking Horse is a naturally smooth gaited ride. Some trainers use all sorts of artificial means to reach that ultimate gait. Feel Better Farm educates the public on the cruel training practice called "soring". Even with the federal laws that have outlawed these practices, they still exist today. Because of our stand against unnatural gait training such as soring, Feel Better Farm cannot approve any adopters, fosters, or volunteers who either own, show or ride horses with such devices.

### **Premarin**

Feel Better Farm feels the need for hormone replacement therapy by the use of Premarin is uncalled for. With the advancements in medical science and the making of synthetic drugs, there is no longer a need for this practice. Mares are inhumanly treated and their offspring are also made to suffer. It is, therefore the policy of Feel Better Farm to educate when possible, and arouse public awareness to the plight of these mares.