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✓ *Animal Welfare*
Horses scheduled for release

By **MARIA GAURA**
Sentinel staff writer

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SANTA CRUZ — Twenty of the 44 Arabian horses seized by animal control officers Oct. 30 will be “permanently released” to their owners today and tomorrow, according to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

“We came to an agreement where 20 of the healthier horses will go back to the owners,” said SPCA spokeswoman Judy Cassada Wednesday. “Ten of them went today and ten will probably go tomorrow. The contract includes a highly structured schedule for feeding and . . . veterinarian visits. The other 24 horses will remain (at the animal shelter) until a resolution of the court case.”

The horses were seized from the Bonny Doon ranch owned by three brothers after an investigation by local and state humane officers indicated that the horses may have been underfed. The District Attorney is now investigating charges of animal neglect and cruelty.

Allegations of underfeeding and animal cruelty were vigorously denied Wednesday by lawyer Gordon Salisbury, who represents Mustafa Sabankaya, one of the brothers. Salisbury said he and two veterinarians were finally allowed access to the horses this week.

“I had two veterinarians with me, and both felt that most of the other horses should be returned immediately,” Salisbury said. “All of the horses released today were totally healthy, and the idea that

they had to be nursed back to health is preposterous. I have the evidence to back it up.”

Salisbury agreed that some of the impounded horses were “skinny,” but said tests will prove that they are healthy.