

Horse rescue group could close doors

Animal Welfare

Pregnant Mare
Rescue needs
donations

By **KIMBERLY WHITE**

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LARKIN VALLEY — Lynn Hummer has a whole lot of mouths to feed, and lives in her hands.

As head of the Pregnant Mare Rescue nonprofit, 16 horses are under her care, either at her Watsonville-area ranch or in foster care with one of her dozens of volunteers.

Over the last six years, the nonprofit has placed 75 equines into permanent homes around the state. But the food, hay, veterinary bills and other expenses are taking their toll, and without more donations, Pregnant Mare Rescue will soon have to close its doors.

"I have to make sure that every horse I bring in, I can care for," Hummer said.

She focuses on pregnant mares to save their lives and that of their offspring, but also because of the health risks associated with the medicinal use of their urine. The urine is harvested out of pregnant horses and used for the hormone-replacement drug Premarin, which critics say heightens the risk of certain cancers.

Hummer founded Pregnant Mare Rescue in 2006, after she attended a Sacramento-area horse auction where horses are brought and sold for slaughter. Each year, about 130,000 American horses are sent to Mexico and Canada to be slaughtered, and the meat is sent overseas for human consumption, according to Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of the Humane Society of the United States.

Until recently, horses could not be slaughtered in

AT A GLANCE

PREGNANT MARE
RESCUE

WHAT: Founded in May 2006 as a temporary, no-kill sanctuary for mares and foals.

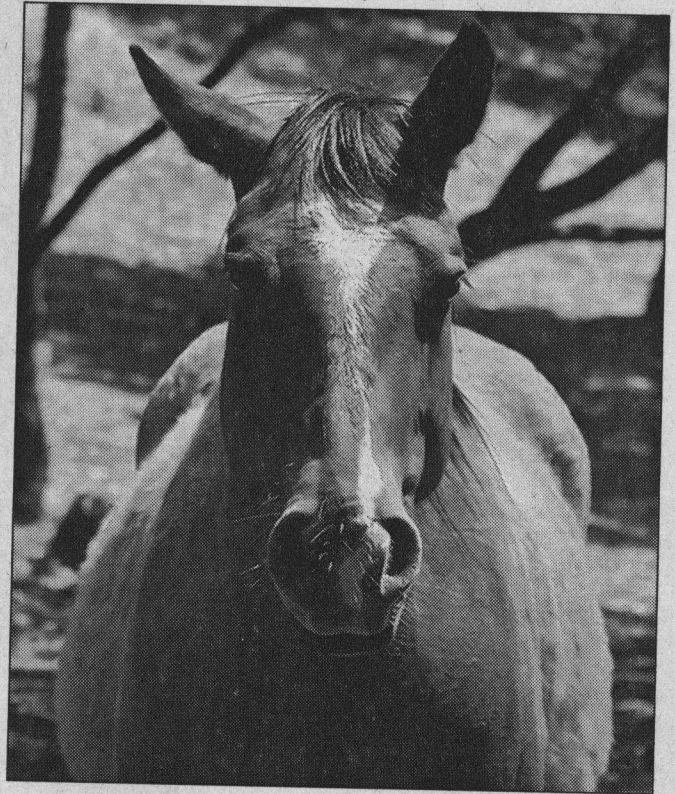
ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Founder Lynn Hummer has rehabilitated and found homes for 75 horses in the last six years

WHERE: Sanctuary sits on about 3 acres north of Watsonville

DETAILS: 408-540-8568, pmrhorses@pregnantmarerescue.com or www.pregnantmarerescue.com

the United States because the U.S. Department of Agriculture — the agency tasked with overseeing the industry — lacked funding to provide inspectors at those plants. But last fall, that ban was lifted as part of a spending bill. No new funds allocated to resume inspections, however, and horse slaughter remains illegal in some states, including California.

The Pregnant Mare Rescue site includes a link to The Equine Welfare Alliance a coalition of horse lovers dedicated to ending the slaughter of American horses. Ending that practice is a top legislative priority for the Humane Society, which has thrown its support behind the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act. The bill, which has bipartisan support in Congress, would prohibit the establishment of domestic horse slaughter facilities, and end the export of American horses for slaughter. The bill was co-authored in the House by Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel, and in the Senate by Sen. Barbara Boxer and



CONTRIBUTED
Kismet, a 3-year-old female, is among the 16 horses available for adoption from Pregnant Mare Rescue.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

But with the winter recess just around the corner, it's unlikely Congress will take up the issue, Pacelle said, adding, "We're disappointed that the Congress is not picking up the legislation to protect horses and we hope that they take the subject up next year."

But the bill faces strong opposition from agribusiness groups and the horse-slaughter industry. Rep. Sue Wallis, R-Wyo., one of the biggest supporters of horse slaughter facilities, argues equines would be more humanely treated here than Mexico, where the industry is unregulated. Horse ownership, and the industry that supports it, has steeply declined since the last slaughter plant closed in 2007, she said, part-

ly because owners no longer have an economically feasible way of selling them.

Opening new plants, she said, is "for the welfare of the horse so they're not abused and neglected," and provides "an economic reason for people to keep them."

Meanwhile, Hummer continues fundraising to keep her nonprofit alive, while working to educate overseas consumers about the health risks of eating horse meat, which she says contains toxic materials. As for domestic slaughter facilities, "It reminds me of the buffalo," she said. "There may come a day where we don't have wild mustangs roaming on the plains."

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