

## WELCOME TO RYERSS FARM FOR AGED EQUINES!



As our name specifies, the residents of our farm are primarily retired horses 20 years of age or older, many with chronic health issues. We also have some horses younger than 20 who were rescued from abusive or neglectful situations. If this is the first time you have been around “senior” horses, you may notice some differences from the other horses you may be used to seeing, such as at horse shows or riding stables. This handout provides information about our residents to help make your visit to Ryerss more interesting and enjoyable.

### SOME FACTS ABOUT SENIOR HORSES

- Despite the best of care, the physical appearance of an elderly horse may gradually change: the back may begin to sag, the belly protrude, the withers and hip bones become more prominent. The legs may change appearance as support for the internal structure of the legs weakens. The coat and facial hairs will turn gray, and the bones of the head will look more pronounced, with deeper hollows above the eyes. The lower lip may droop. **These are all common signs of aging.**

- Just as in very elderly humans, as horses age, their metabolism slows but their digestive system may not be as efficient, which means that the senior horse’s body needs to work harder to assimilate the nutrients sufficient for basic bodily functions. As a result, even horses who were “easy keepers” in their prime may begin to lose weight as they age, despite the fact that they may be eating a normal amount of food. In addition, due to the fact that the horses at Ryerss are no longer working, they may lose muscle tone, which also will make a horse appear thinner and its bones more prominent. **Ryerss provides its residents with an individualized diet, including various supplements to boost the horse’s ability to absorb and utilize necessary vitamins and nutrients.**

- Some horses have swelling in the legs and/or changes in the hooves due to age and various medical conditions. **Ryerss residents are regularly seen by a farrier, who trims the horses’ hooves and applies corrective shoes when necessary. Any leg/hoof conditions are promptly treated by our staff, and by a vet when required, and chronic conditions are regularly monitored. Many of our horses also receive joint supplements and NSAIDs to relieve chronic discomfort from conditions such as arthritis.**

- Senior horses often have missing teeth, which may cause the lower lip to stick out, and the horse may sometimes drool. Please cut apples and carrots for *all* the horses into small pieces to prevent choking, and to make chewing easier for horses with missing teeth. Horses with dental problems can and do enjoy soft treats, such as cooked carrots or applesauce, so you may want to bring some on your next visit! **Ryerss horses have regular visits from an equine dentist. Because horses’ teeth continue to grow throughout their lives, the dentist periodically “floats” the teeth (files them down so they wear more evenly). The dentist will extract teeth that are problematic, and otherwise treat any mouth and tooth problems.**

•Some of our residents have medical conditions such as Cushings Syndrome (a chronic disease of the pituitary gland). Cushings horses at Ryerss are identified by a yellow name card on the front of their stall. Horses with Cushings may have a long, wavy coat which is difficult for them to shed, and a “pot belly.” However, most Cushings horses remain alert, bright, and interested in their surroundings. **Cushings horses should not have too much sugar in their diet, so feed them low-sugar treats such as cut-up turnips or sugarless mints. Ryerss treats Cushings horses with medications to control the disease and improve their quality of life.**

•You may notice growths of one kind or another on a few of our horses. These can be benign sarcoids, or melanomas or squamous cell carcinomas. Most of these tumors are slow-growing and a horse can live a fairly normal life for many years with them. **All our horses are regularly monitored by a vet and treated for these conditions to the fullest extent possible for each individual case.**

•Some of our rescued horses have been abused in the past and may have scars on their bodies. All horses will sometimes injure themselves in the field or get into scuffles with another horse, so you might observe cuts, scrapes and bruises of one kind or another. **Ryerss treats all such injuries as soon as they are discovered.**

•Although most horses sleep standing up, occasionally a horse might lie down in the field or in its stall for a nap or to bask in the warm sun. This is especially true of horses who have leg or hoof problems and sometimes like to take the weight off their feet. Horses also love to roll in the dirt and mud! However, if you see a horse lying down or rolling who doesn't seem able to get up or seems in distress, please bring it to the attention of a volunteer or staff member.

•Ryerss residents who are in good health are turned out to pasture 24/7 during the summer. **However, please be assured that these horses are monitored during herd checks several times a day, and any horse who appears to be injured, ill, or losing weight is brought back to the barn for treatment and extra TLC.**

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We hope this handout answers some of your questions and gives you a better understanding of our wonderful senior and rescued residents. **If at any time you have questions or concerns about any of our horses, please ask a Ryerss staff member or volunteer, who will be happy to help you or refer you to our Animal Welfare Manager.**

**RYERSS IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION & IS SUPPORTED ENTIRELY BY DONATIONS AND GRANTS.**

**YOUR GENEROSITY IS GREATLY APPRECIATED.**

**ENJOY YOUR VISIT & COME BACK SOON!**

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