



Lifesavers Wild Horse Rescue Good Neighbor to the North/East

By Shirley Harriman

Lancaster – Lake LA resident Lisa Interrante, Operations Manager at Lifesavers Wild Horse Rescue, graciously accepted my request for a visit to her workplace at 23809 East Avenue J ... 240th and J is the general location. It is amazing. It is heartwarming. Sometimes it is heart breaking. What it constantly and for certain is: the largest horse rescue in the United States.

Currently between the main ranch in the Antelope Valley and sanctuary property called Wild Horse Canyon in Caliente/Twin Oaks more than 500 horses reside in peace and

comfort, most of them freed from the despicable appalling wicked slaughter auctions. The horses are living together in herds, like horses do naturally. 90% of the population is mustangs while 10% are domestic horses.

At 240th and J the ranch is 46 acres. The Caliente property is 745 acres with 2 running springs ... closest thing to Heaven for horses indeed.

It breaks out into two categories: 1) training and adoption to those horses that are adoptable and 2) sanctuary to those horses that have suffered a high level of cruelty and deserve the life God gave them and to live out the rest of their lives free and safe in retirement. There is absolutely NO breaking of horses, only gentling of each and every horse. At any one given point in time there are 150 to 160 horses being gentled together.

The Lifesavers, Inc. pamphlet states: 'Our mission is to save American mustangs and domestic horses from abuse, neglect and slaughter through programs of rescue, adoption, sanctuary, education and healing'. It is a very complex and lengthy study in horses, healing, sanctuary, adoption, rescue and education ... each topic worthy of a detailed article.

At 240th and J, there is a hospital for injured, sick or extra daily care horses. Once they are whole again, they are released into their herd. There were no patients in the hospital when this report was taken.

Next to the hospital is a large pen for Beebo. Beebo is a pet bull. His owner passed away as did his companion goat, Peanut, Butter and Jelly, PBJ for short. Someone heard of the plight of the orphan Beebo and adopted him. He is now a resident of Northern California living out his years there in comfort and safety with people who care for him.

There were pens dubbed the *old folks'* pens. That is where horses that require special grain for their diets, have weight loss issues where traveling from feeder to feeder with their herd was difficult and those who are on pain or comfort medication and arthritic horses. Every night these seniors are brought into the old folks' home for feed and sleep. Then during the day they are back out in the field with the other horses for their play and exercise. Many are rescues from the dude ranch string. One horse suffers from Cushing's which requires he eats grass feed only and gets his medication safely.

There is another pen for the partially blind, or moon blind, but still have and deserve quality of their life. There are two donkeys rooming with the horses in harmony.

The "gentle" pen is where horses are worked with getting them to the adoptable stage. Once they have been "gentled" and have a safe personality, are calm, willing to trust again then they can be adopted. These horses are wild, not domesticated animals. If the trainers deem the horse too wild, then that horse goes to Caliente/Twin Oaks to naturally and safely live out their days.

The facility is focused on training and adoption. The training pens are called the 'green pens'. There are no barns, but rather large open spaces for the horses to live naturally in herds.

Most interesting is the genius of the "Alley System" of moving groups of horses or just one horse from one location to the other. It is much like the lock and alley system used in jails or prisons. It is a system where the horse(s) can be moved from place to place safely. The gates rotate open and closed as a horse(s) moves from one area to the next. Trainers, some part time and farriers move horses to the area best suited for their work through the alley system which keeps them calm, safe and secure.

The most complex of the systems in place is called the Squeeze Chute. The horse is calmly encouraged to go through the shoot into a padded "room" where the animal is tilted on their side, the feet swing out for the farrier to take care of the feet, to be dewormed, and receive their vaccines. The horses are too wild to do it any other way. At first glance, it appears to be cruel when in fact it is the best thing for them to get the care they need. There is always an attendant monitoring the horse's breathing and to hold the head to prevent loss of oxygen. In this Squeeze area it is like an operating room with at least 7 people in attendance with the horse. The veterinarian is Dr. Larry Connelly of Littlerock who has been with the rescue since 1997.

The very large indoor arena is used for Boot Camp and Baby Boot Camp. This provides exciting hands-on experience learning how to safely and effectively gentle, handle and train a wild horse under the closest supervision and guidance of experienced clinicians. It is a 4-day event. The fee varies from \$1,300 to \$1,500. Clinicians work with participants in skillful gentling techniques, how to spend time with the horse bonding and encouraging trust. Participants enhance their horse skills and how to deal with issues they might have with their own horse. There is an in-depth horsemanship class at the boot camps.

The horses spend their days grazing. Horses are 24-hour a day grazers. Here they are free fed 24 hours around the clock. 50-60 bales of hay per day are consumed by the horses.

A great opportunity to serve these horses is with a chiropractor who works with horses, helps farriers with the feet who is also a veterinarian and a retired US Army Ranger.

All of this heaven on earth for horses started in 1997 with a mare named China. She was adopted and the adoption fee she garnered saved 2 more horses and the cycle began. Over the years 1,500+ horses have been rescued because of China. China lived to be 25 years old. Last year she got sick and lost her fight for life. She is laid to rest on the grounds.

Lifesavers Wild Horse Rescue works with Wild Horse Warriors. According to their brochure, 22 veterans commit suicide in the United States every single day. Both the war veteran and the horse are symbols of strength and freedom. The theory is rescued wild horses and wounded warriors can heal each other, and they have living proof. Wild horse gentling is an effective therapeutic approach to the PTSD condition. An article with one warrior is in the works. "You can hear God whispering through the horse's breath," said Xavier who has offered to do an interview and explain how animal assisted therapy benefits man and horse.

How you can help: Please consider being a sustaining donor by pledging a recurring gift. Volunteer some time, let everyone know you support this rescue. If you have \$20 to give, you will feed one horse for a whole week. The number at the rescue is 661-727-1205. www.wildhorserescue.org