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## “Introducing Your New Horse”

You're excited about your new horse purchase and can't wait to get him home. Safely integrating him into a new herd and new surroundings takes planning. Think back to the last time you moved. It's traumatic for your new horse too. The water tastes different. There are new sights and smells and a whole new herd to fit into. It's a common time for injuries and mishaps to occur so make this transition as safe and injury-free as you can.

Before bringing your new horse home, prepare the paddock or pasture area where you will quarantine your horse. It's best to quarantine or keep your horse separate for a week to ten days. Your new horse should have access to its own food and water. This prevents the spread of diseases to your other horses. Choose a location your horse can see and hear his new pasture mates. This will help him adjust to being alone. Check your quarantine paddock fence to ensure it is horse- safe. Ready this area before your horse arrives rather than trying to hook up fences and fill water tanks with a new horse pacing the fence line.

Find out what your new horse has been eating. Sweet feed? Pellets? Grass hay? Supplements? Ask the seller to provide you a ration of both hay and grain to take home with you. Abrupt diet changes can cause colic especially when coupled with the stress of a move. Gradually change your horses daily diet by mixing the seller's feed with yours until he is converted to your feed.

Select a quiet spot to unload your horse, a place without a lot of noise and activity. Introduce him to the quarantine area by leading him along the fence line so he learns his new boundaries. Let him sniff the water tank and have some hay out so he has something to keep his mind and mouth occupied.

Check in on your new horse frequently the first few days. Moving from familiar surrounding is stressful to a horse. Stress can manifest itself in fence pacing





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(worry), not eating or drinking (anxiousness), or calling to other horses (loneliness). Closely monitor your horse's food and water intake as well as his manure output. If you notice your horse isn't eating or drinking, encourage him by letting him relax in a stall, drinking water flavored with Kool Aid, making a bran mash or feeding a few carrots or apples. Anything you do to encourage them to eat and drink normally will reduce your risk of colic.

After your quarantine period has expired, move your horse to a paddock adjacent to your herd for a few days. That way the horses can check one another out across the fence. Then select a buddy for your new horse. Choose a quiet horse in the middle of the pecking order of the herd. The pecking order is the social ranking from alpha or lead horse to lowest. You can tell this order by watching your horses interact. The alpha or lead horse comes into the barn first, eats first and drinks first. The lowest in the pecking order will be the last to do these things. All the other horse will have their place somewhere in between. Put these two horses in a pasture together and give them a week or two to make friends. Then put them both out into the herd together. It may take a few days for the horses to sort things out. Your new horse needs to find his place in the pecking order. Remember to stay safe. Don't try and get into the middle of any disputes. Check all your horses for injuries often during this time of transition. Set your new horse up for success by using this gradual process for a safe transition to his new home. Give him time to adjust to his new surroundings and soon your new horse will be part of the family.

## Story

I carry on my family's heritage by using my police horse for work. I come from a long line of working horsemen. Both my grandfather and father were "Teamsters". They raised, broke and worked draft horses in the lumber camps of northern Wisconsin. These teams of horses worked hard for a living. Moving logs and hauling dray loads of timber from the pine forests to the Chippewa River where they were rafted to sawmills down the river. My father tells this story. The last workhorse we had on the farm was a 2000 lb. Belgium gelding. We bought him from the neighbors by the name of Kukula, a Polish family who





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lived along the Chippewa River. The horse was 3 years old and hadn't been out of the barn all winter. The only work he had ever done was pull milk cans out to the road, pulled only by one tug. It was June and he still had his winter hair. Besides that, his stall was kind of down in a pit. When I looked at him I wasn't too impressed, but the price was right, \$250. This was a lot of money in the 1950's. I decided to take him on a trial basis.

I had one devil of a time leading him home. All he wanted was that fresh green grass on the side of the road. Finally, when I kept him in the middle of the road he followed along quite nicely. Suddenly he acted as if he wanted to lie down in the middle of the gravel road on County N. I pulled on the lead rope but he just laid down and rolled and rolled in the dust. I was near the curves by the river and I was afraid a car would come along and run over us. I finally got him home and in the barn.

My Dad said, "If you are going to try him out, let's harness him up." We had some huge 16 ft. hemlock logs across the road from the house we wanted to skid. By now, I had named him Barney. Well, we had a devil of a time getting Barney to respond to our commands. When we pulled on the lines, he did well, but nothing we said made a difference. Finally we got Barney backed up to the log and hooked up the tongs on the end of a hemlock log. "Giddy up" Dad called. Nothing happened. Dad tapped him with the lines and Barney took off down the trail we had come in on. He was making a good pull when the log hooked a big root on a stump. The log stopped, but Barney didn't. As the hame's strap broke, Barney walked right through the harness. Of course, my Pa was hollering, "Whoa, Whoa, Whoa!" He finally pulled on the lines hard and Barney stopped. Not the least bit excited or spooked. Pa said, "Take the Kukula's the \$250. You will have a darn good horse if we can teach him English."

