

Equine WELLNESS

For a long, healthy life!

EATING LIKE A HORSE

How she eats is as important as what she eats.

TODAY'S HORSE CARE:

A new look at the industry standard

STRINGHALT IN HORSES:

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO TREATMENT

*Natural horsemanship:
Teaching your horse how to TIE*

How to check
**YOUR HORSE'S
DIGITAL PULSE**

SWAYZE'S JOURNEY

Rescued from a kill pen through a case of mistaken identity, Swayze hits his stride as VIP Ambassador at Sky Dog Sanctuary

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for SKIN
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For a long, healthy life!

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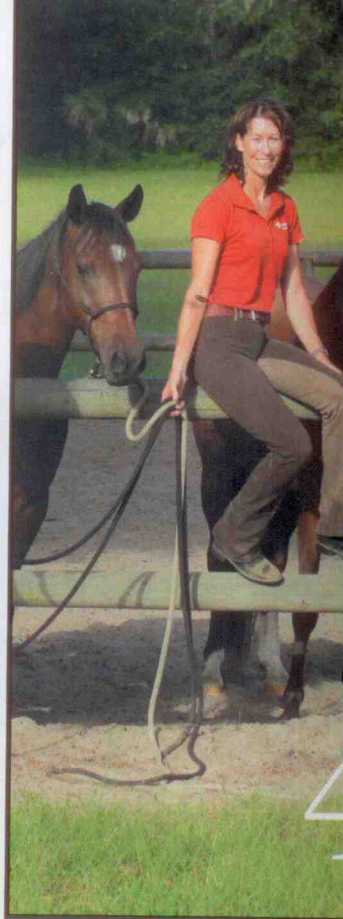
COVER PHOTOGRAPHY

Photo by: Clare Staples-Read



When he first arrived at Sky Dog Sanctuary in Oregon after being rescued from a Colorado kill pen, Swayze was sick, weak and emaciated. In fact, he almost didn't make it. But thanks to the care and loving treatment he received at the sanctuary, he eventually blossomed into the healthy and happy horse pictured on our cover. Turn to page 24 to read Swayze's full story.

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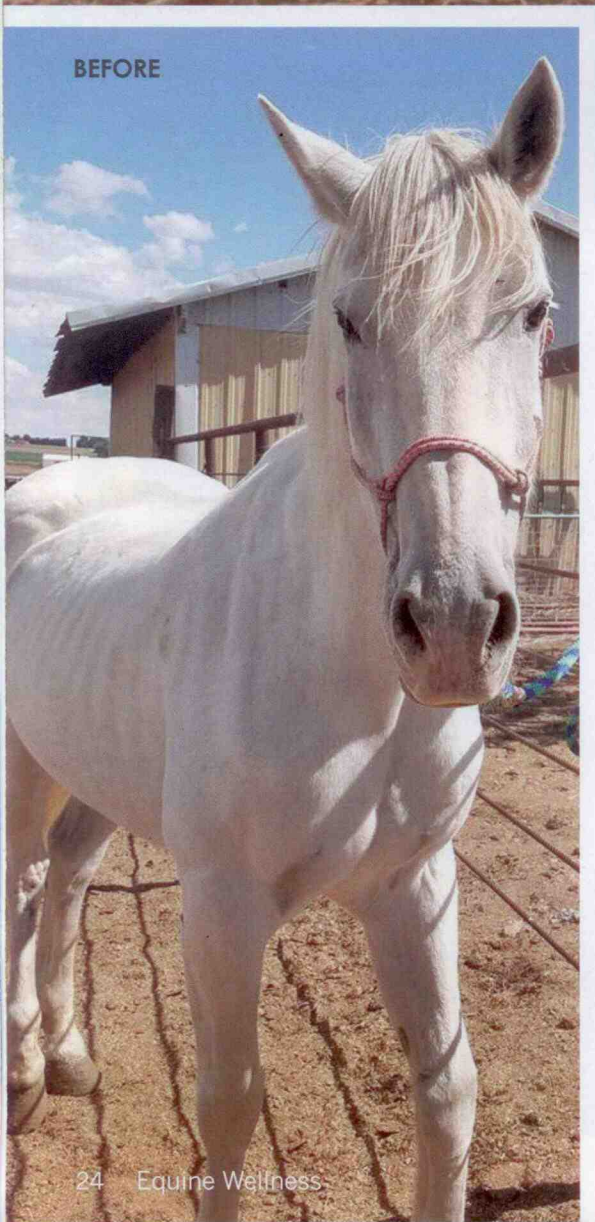
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Photos courtesy of Clare Staples-Read

AFTER



BEFORE

SWAYZE'S JOURNEY

From a kill pen in Colorado to VIP at Sky Dog Sanctuary, Swayze is finding his stride.

By Lindsay Day

Clare Staples-Read is originally from England, but it's American Mustangs she's dedicated to saving. "When I was young I used to watch this television show called *Champion the Wonder Horse*, about a wild Mustang and his band of horses," says Clare of the show that first introduced her to the iconic American breed. But it wasn't until she moved to the US later in life that she became aware of the significant struggles these wild horses now face.

Today, Clare is the president and founder of Sky Dog Sanctuary in Oregon, an organization committed to helping at-risk Mustangs from across the country – those that have ended up in kill pens, at auctions, or that have been neglected or abused. Yet not all the equine residents at Sky Dog are Mustangs, and that's where a remarkable horse named Swayze and his friends comes in.

IN PICTURES

Clare first learned of Swayze when someone tagged her in a Facebook post last fall. All Mustangs that have been removed from public lands by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have a unique freeze brand on the left side of their necks, a marking easily identified by the white hair that grows over it. Yet in Swayze's case it was harder to tell, recalls Clare. There were two horses in the photos from the Colorado kill pen, and with winter on the way their hair was growing in longer. They both also had white necks. Given assurances that these horses were indeed Mustangs, Clare decided to take a chance and bring them both home.

There was something else Clare noticed about the photos – in each picture of Swayze, she could catch a glimpse of what appeared to be a donkey. “You'd see the leg of a donkey standing behind him, or an ear poking out, or a donkey's tail,” she says. “In the end I called the lady at the kill pen and asked ‘Do you have any donkeys on the lot?’ She said, ‘Yeah, we have two.’” Since Sky Dog was sending a four-horse trailer to Colorado anyway, Clare decided to bring the donkeys back to the sanctuary with the two horses, who turned out not to be Mustangs after all.

“It was one rescue but we managed to save four animals,” she says. The two donkeys, affectionately named Jack and Lady Betty (a jack and an old jenny, respectively) are inseparable and have remained at Sky Dog ranch. Unbeknownst to Clare, the mare who came with Swayze, named Pricilla, was pregnant. She gave birth to a healthy foal in the months following her arrival at Sky Dog.

Clare credits Swayze with saving them all – but given the weak and emaciated state he was in when he left the kill pen, he almost didn't make it himself.

A HARROWING JOURNEY HOME

As the trailer carrying Swayze, Pricilla, and the two donkeys passed through Wyoming, about an hour into their journey from the kill pen, Clare got an urgent call from her hauler. Swayze had gone down in the trailer, and looked as if he might not survive the trip.

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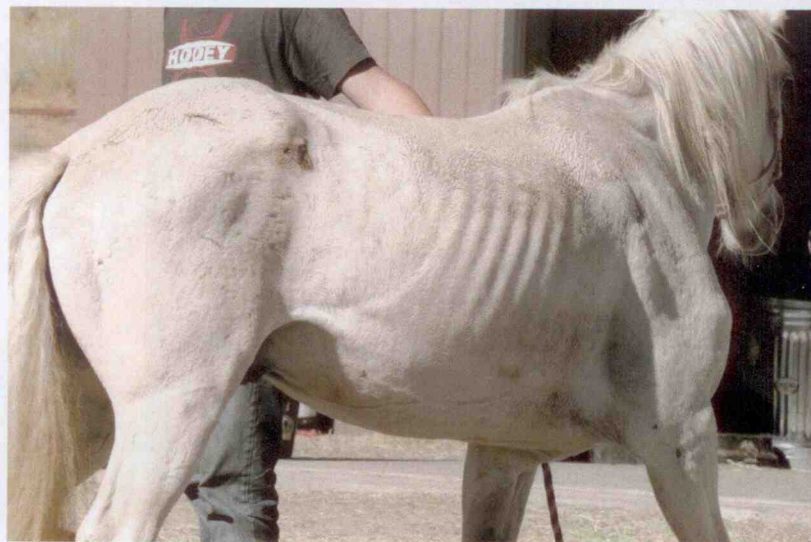
SKY DOG SANCTUARY'S MISSION

LEARN MORE AT SKYDOGRANCH.ORG

Sky Dog Sanctuary has locations in Malibu and Calabasas, California, as well as a 9,000-acre ranch near Bend, Oregon, which offers an expansive natural habitat for the at-risk Mustangs. The sanctuary also aims to:

- Demonstrate that wild horses can co-exist on the open range in ecological balance with many species of wildlife, and demonstrate how to best manage land to increase its carrying capacity and reverse range degradation.
- Provide a place of refuge, healing and peace for veteran volunteers as well as people in recovery who are actively working 12-step programs.

How you can help: Sky Dog welcomes donations, which can be made via their website. Donations go directly to help save at-risk Mustangs and to pay for hay, feed, vet and farrier costs. People can also sponsor a Mustang on a monthly basis. For those local to one of Sky Dog's locations, volunteering can be a fulfilling way to experience Mustang horses in a beautiful and tranquil environment.



THE CURRENT STATE AND FATE OF AMERICAN MUSTANGS

- The US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for the protection and management of Mustangs on public lands under the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burros Act.
- Public lands managed by the BLM have multiple competing uses including recreation, mining, forestry, grazing for livestock and providing habitat for other wildlife. Roughly eight times more public grazing land in the US is currently authorized for privately owned livestock compared to free-roaming Mustangs and burros.
- Wild Mustang populations are growing at a rate of 15% to 20% per year, and because grazing lands can only support a finite number of animals in a healthy state, the BLM engages in population control measures to limit the number of free-roaming horses on public lands.
- Helicopter roundups – the BLM's primary method of herd management and population control – are used to capture and remove horses from rangelands. The Mustangs are then auctioned, adopted, or transferred to long-term holding facilities. An estimated 45,000 free-roaming horses and burros are currently in these holding facilities. Such practices are widely considered unsustainable, and for many unethical.
- Horse welfare and Mustang advocacy groups are also exerting pressure for more humane approaches. Strategies advocated include the use of fertility control methods, developing ecotourism, raising the profile of American Mustangs and seeking a better balance of rangeland allocation between Mustangs and livestock grazing.



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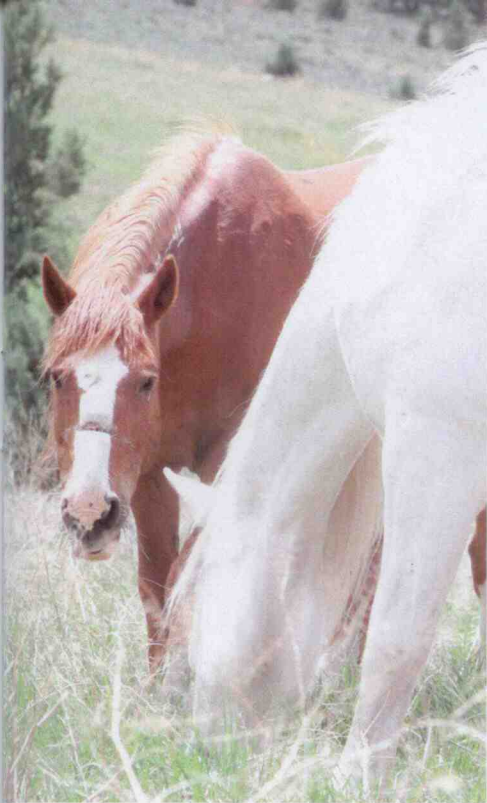
In Malibu at the time, Clare immediately began Googling vets. Thankfully, she was able to locate a vet who treated Swayze with electrolytes and fluids. Regaining some strength, he was given the green light to travel, and the group continued on their way.

But Swayze wasn't in the clear yet. The veterinarian who tended to him in Wyoming found cancerous melanoma tumors around his tail, and when Swayze and Pricilla arrived at Sky Dog ranch, they both came down with strangles. They were strictly quarantined and treated for three weeks until they tested negative for this highly contagious respiratory illness. The team at Sky Dog then began the slow process of bringing Swayze back up to a healthy weight. Because winter was closing in, he was kept inside at night and blanketed during colder temperatures, since he didn't yet have the body condition to keep himself warm.

VIP TREATMENT

Estimated to be somewhere in his mid-20s, Swayze has since blossomed into a strong and magnificent horse. "There is something super special about Swayze," says Clare. "He kind of looks like a Spanish horse. He has a ranch brand on him, and you can tell he was a really solid ranch horse. If you go to put a halter on him, for example, he just stands there and drops his head." He is also incredibly striking, she adds. "Strangely, no matter whether we get mud, rain or snow, he stays the most sparkling white color. It's kind of bizarre – he's like some kind of weird self-cleaning horse!"

Swayze remains a hard keeper and gets extra feedings to keep him in good form. Because stress can cause him to drop weight, Clare found him a suitable companion, an older Mustang named Read who has overcome some challenges of his own. Acquired from an Oklahoma kill pen, Read has an old halter wound that left a section of his nasal passages completely open and exposed. "He's as resilient and as much



Swayze and his friend Read, a Mustang with an old halter wound, share a pasture together at Sky Dog Sanctuary.

of a fighter as Swayze is,” says Clare, adding that the two make an odd but happy couple. “It’s like each of them thinks the other is in need of being taken care of.”

AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY

Education is an important part of the mission at Sky Dog. “At some point, I’m just going to be another full sanctuary that reaches its limit of how many horses it can take. But I feel if I can raise awareness and educate people so they understand the issues facing Mustangs, that will help far more horses than I can ever help in my lifetime.”

Sky Dog Sanctuary encourages prospective horse owners to adopt Mustangs directly from the BLM, via Internet adoptions, prison auctions, or from BLM holding pens. By showcasing the stories of the rescued Mustangs at the Sanctuary, and providing members of the public opportunities to meet them, Sky Dog aims to provide living proof of how special and valuable wild American Mustangs are.

RETURNING THE GIFT

Though Sky Dog is a sanctuary for Mustangs, Clare is incredibly thankful to have Swayze, along with Pricilla, her foal, and the donkeys Jack and Lady Betty. “Sometimes I look at them and I think, none of you are supposed to be here”. But Clare says she doesn’t believe in coincidences. “Somehow, for whatever reason, they were listed as Mustangs, and for whatever reason the donkeys stood in those pictures.

Today Swayze and his friend Read live in a pasture that wraps part way around Clare’s ranch house on the Oregon property. Though he may be an unlikely ambassador for a Mustang sanctuary, it’s a role Swayze seems to be taking in stride. 🐾

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When protection is needed:

Trail riding in terrain that the feet are not adapted to, changing from wet to dry environments and therapeutic cases.

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- Sole-Guard pad
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