



AMERICAN
HORSE COUNCIL

BUYER BEWARE – A CAUTIONARY TALE

Numerous American Horse Council members have expressed concern regarding the practice of “Ransom” or “Bail-Out” sales marketed online. These complaints echo concerning media reports on fraudulent practices that take advantage of the empathetic nature of the equine enthusiast community. In an attempt to alert uninformed, yet sympathetic, individuals to the risks involved in sourcing animals from these operations, the American Horse Council is releasing the following statement. Instead of contributing to a problematic practice, we strongly encourage interested parties who are willing and able to re-home a horse to utilize the numerous programs listed through the United Horse Coalition’s Equine Resource Database at <https://unitedhorsecoalition.org/>

American Horse Council Statement on “Kill-Pen Bail/Ransom”

The American Horse Council and its members are encouraging horse owners, horse rescues and equine enthusiasts to be extremely cautious before engaging with organizations and individuals promoting time sensitive rescue offers (often referred to as “bail” or “ransom”). Some horse traders contracted to fill orders for Mexican and Canadian horse processing have developed a scam targeting equine rescue operations and an uninformed general public. These “Bail-out” or “ransom” operations are run in conjunction with feedlot operators who buy animals at low market prices. These order brokers then post the animals on social media platforms with exaggerated price tags and an arbitrary deadline implying a day of shipment across an international border where the horses will be processed for human consumption.

Due to the time sensitivity of the offer, people feel compelled to “save” the horse advertised on social media and purchase it sight unseen and are encouraged to utilize the seller’s contacts to inspect the horse, attend to the horse, and transport the horse. All of which is done at additional cost and without traditional proof. As reported on and published in industry media and numerous social media platforms, incidents have been shared regarding sellers fabricating how much money has or hasn’t been raised for a bailed horse; the horse delivered was not the one presented in photos or videos; the horse was not in the same physical condition as when payment was made; and in some cases, the animals themselves were never at risk of being exported and processed for human consumption, instead they were marketed as such to increase the sense of urgency.

Legal action has been taken against several individuals at the forefront of these practices. Law enforcement and regulatory officials at both the state and the federal level have, and continue to, investigate the practices of industry participants and enforce existing laws that are being broken, specifically animal cruelty, document forging, veterinarian malpractice, illegal transport and taxation issues. While the methods of marketing these animals may not be illegal, the U.S. equine community should not encourage or support the actions of these individuals and should instead support the many professional equine rescue organizations that exist in communities across the country, many of which can be found at <https://unitedhorsecoalition.org/memberorganizations/#uhc-non-profit-members>