

Valley Center



Hope in the Valley director Ande Miller talks to Thunder, who was born to Strawberry last month. “He’s just kind of a little guy,” Miller says. But he’s healthy. Thunder’s mom, meanwhile, is improving. *Photo by Chris Strunk*

Thunder rolls in

By **Chris Strunk**

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Just seven months since its own inception, **Hope** in the Valley horse shelter in rural Valley Center became a maternity ward last month.

One of the shelter’s rescued horses, Strawberry, gave birth during a storm in late May. Thunder, the colt was named, is a bit smaller than he should be. But, like proud mothers, the shelter’s directors were happy to report Thunder is healthy.

“He’s just kind of a little guy,” director Ande Miller said.

Thunder’s birth brought to eight the number of horses the shelter has rescued since it first saved a sickly, toothless Thoroughbred named Jim in November. One of the horses died. Another was euthanized.

Directors **hope** to find permanent adoptive homes for Strawberry and Thunder.

“We’re just really grateful we had the opportunity to save her,” director Lisa Allen said.

The shelter bought Strawberry at an auction May 7 in El Dorado. The 16-year-old mare’s body was covered with ticks and lice. Her hair was so thin, her skin was showing. Strawberry’s legs were swollen to more than double their normal size, which happens when a horse’s body lacks protein.

Yellow pus dripped from her left eye. The infection in her eye, which got

worse because of neglect, led to blindness. She could barely walk. Her hooves had not been tended to in years.

“She was headed for the slaughter truck,” Miller said.

Allen and Miller said they suspected Strawberry was pregnant. That was confirmed by a veterinarian the day after the sale.

“The vet said she was due any day,” Miller said. “We **hoped** we could put it off a while, to fatten her up.”

The Paint had no trouble delivering Thunder.

“He’s small,” Miller said. “We expected that. We didn’t know what else to expect.”

To help **Hope**

Ande Miller, one of the three directors of **Hope** in the Valley Equine Rescue, said the organization has the space and facilities to take care of at least six additional horses right now. Problem is, it doesn’t have the funds for food, shots and other necessities.

Hope in the Valley is seeking donations of cash, brome hay bales and grain. Many of the horses require so-called senior feed, which costs about \$10 per 50-pound bag. That’s about a three-day supply.

Donations are tax deductible.

To help **Hope** in the Valley, call 755-2826 or 519-4129.