

Wichita

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Area horse rescues need hay donations due to reduced harvest

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Two Wichita area horse rescues have put out the call for donations of hay to help them get through the winter safely. Hay yields this year were down 50% to 75% and that means hay prices have doubled. Both Hope In the Valley Equine Rescue and Sanctuary, Valley Center, and Southern Winds Equine Rescue and Recovery Center, Udall, found that the reduced yield means they did not get enough hay from their fields to ensure they have enough for the winter.

At Southern Winds, Victor McMullen, Sr. added: "I usually keep a hay bank of 10 to 12 big round bales to have on hand to help out people who run into trouble getting hay for their horses. This year, I could use another 10 round bales just to feed our rescues, and I don't have any hay in the 'bank'."

Part of the problem is the hot dry weather which put pastures in decline, so the horses were put on hay much earlier this year than usual. That means using more hay before winter even arrives.

Southern Winds feeds brome hay through the winter, while Hope In the Valley will take prairie hay or brome. Both organizations anticipate that this will be a tough winter with hay prices up, especially for those who have lost household income due to the economy.

"I get calls about every other day from people who are worried they will not be able to afford to feed their horse this winter," McMullen said.

At Hope In the Valley, they have more horses to care for going into the winter this year and they, too, anticipate that with hay prices up, more people may be forced to give up their horses.

McMullen also said he would be willing to purchase hay if he could find a source. Last year, horse owners could find prairie hay and even some brome sellers at \$4 to \$5 a square bale. Big round bales were in the \$40 to \$50 range and even less coming into the summer to clear out inventory. This year, going market for prairie hay is \$7 a bale with big rounds at \$60 to \$70. Brome hay is running as much as \$100 a bale. The key at this point is finding it. Many sellers have already sold out their supply, while others who normally had hay to sell, only harvested enough to feed their own horses and cattle.

A big round bale can feed four to five horses for about a week, a single horse for up to five weeks. An average 70-pound square bale feeds one horse for two days. Currently, Southern Winds is caring for nine horses and Hope In the Valley is caring for 27 equines.

If you have hay to donate or sell, contact Hope In the Valley at 316-519-4129 and Southern Winds at 316-830-0013. If you have hay for sale, post your contact information along with the kind of hay and

types of bales so that horse owners can find you. If you're a horse owner needing to buy hay, leave a comment about what you're looking for. If you think you'll need help, contact the rescues before the situation gets dire.

And, of course, if you'd like to know more about adopting a horse from the rescues, it will help them say "yes" when the calls come in.



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