



Horses



What a beauty! Meet Toy, officially known as Oh My Harrison's Toy. Toy is our resident senior citizen, our Grande Dame! A rarity for horses, Toy has spent her entire life—33 years and counting—in one place. As such, she likes to supervise as we take care of HER place.

In her earlier years, Toy was a brood mare, which is to say she had several babies that were sold off. She's a Morgan horse, a breed popular as working, racing, and family horses. And let's be honest: she's absolutely stunning. It's likely buyers were lined up for each of her babies before they were even born.

Much like the Velveteen Rabbit, the hair on Toy's little nose has been rubbed off from many years of too rough love—in her case, riding gear. Now her back is swayed and she has arthritis in her hips, likely from wearing a saddle before she finished growing, which is a common occurrence. Today, Toy enjoys midday naps, protecting her goat herd, and most of all... mothering Cashew and Oats—two male calves we rescued in February 2021.

Right away, it was obvious Toy missed her family. Luckily, we learned about a horse named Apache that needed a home—and Toy needed a friend. For a

short time, they were happy. But Apache passed too quickly, adding to Toy's sorrow, rather than saving her from it. Now she was grieving her old life and a new friend. Toy remained despondent for some time. Would our love ever be enough to make her happy?

That's when we rescued Cashew and Oats. They were just calves when they moved next door to Toy. Immediately, Toy became the nosy neighbor, constantly peering over the fence. She was entranced—and the calves liked her, too! So, we moved the boys into Toy's pasture. The three were inseparable right away! The little cows found comfort in their new "mother". And Toy definitely enjoyed nurturing babies for the first time.

Toy was like a new horse. One morning, shortly after the babies arrived, a huge snowstorm struck the farm. The caretakers were met with a scary site on their morning rounds: Toy lying down in her snowy pasture. They immediately ran in...but stopped just as quickly. Toy was shimmying her back all around in the snow! She was **LOVING** it, snorting and rolling like a young foal! At her age, that's akin to a great grandparent making snow angels! We knew we'd finally given her the peace she deserved.

Now, the boys are bigger than Toy and live in the pasture next door, although they still meet to catch up each day. How Toy must have mourned each of her babies that was taken from her! Cashew and Oats filled a void for Toy: finally, babies who needed her, that she could love.

Here in the United States, horses are technically not used for food. That's different from any of our other rescues. However, horses are still abused and worked to death, and still suffer as a result of animal agriculture. Brood mares like Toy are repeatedly bred and their babies taken from them. It's by no means a bucolic life. However, the other fates she missed are just as bad, if not worse.



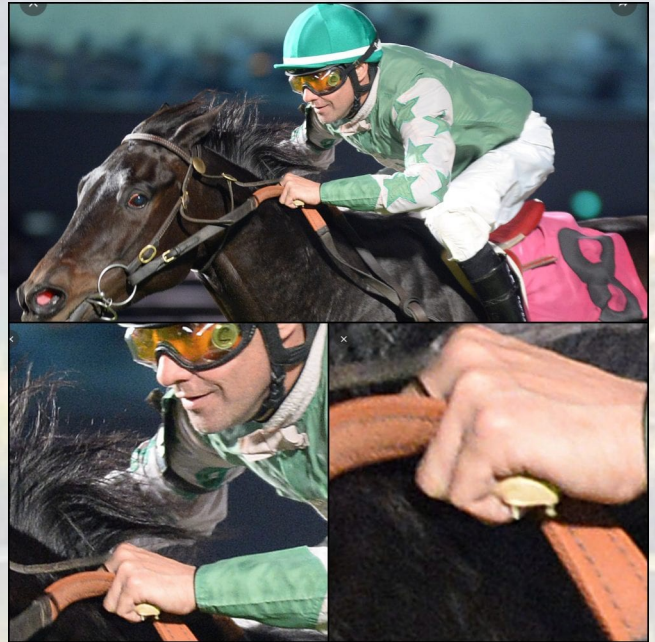
Because they are so strong, Morgan horses like Toy often win races despite their smaller size. Their strength also means that they can be used to work on farms, and in urban areas where horse-drawn carriage rides masquerade as luxurious experiences.

In fact, much of the cruelty inflicted upon horses is painted to give the impression that “the horse set” is somehow upscale. In the USA, the Kentucky Derby is one of the most “important” races for a horse to win. Those who support the industry attend lavish parties that often require cocktail attire, most notably in the form of ridiculously fancy hats. But there is absolutely nothing classy about an industry that sees 1 horse death per 1,000 starts. In 2000, in the USA about 1,000 horses died on the racetrack— from injuries or internal causes. Another 10,000 racehorses were killed off the course, often because of injuries sustained during races. When a racehorse is no longer profitable, they may be exported to other countries where horse meat is eaten.

If Toy had wound up as a racehorse, she would have endured a world of injustice. She may have been given drugs to enhance her performance, and to mask her pain. Several states have recently passed laws that limit the number of times a horse can be whipped during a race. It says something about the industry as a whole that such laws even need to be passed—and only due to public outrage. A jockey named Victor Espinoza whipped his horse, American Pharaoh, about 32 times...in 2 minutes and 3 seconds. He claimed that he was keeping the horse “busy.” Earlier in his career, he’d been fined for tearing the skin on another horse while whipping her, too, during a race. Still, Espinoza won the Kentucky Derby with American Pharaoh and continued racing him. He was not penalized. When a winning racehorse survives drugs, whippings, overtraining, he or she is forcibly bred so that a horse with superior genes for speed can be born, sold, and raced. All for money: American Pharaoh earned his owners over \$8 million over his career. The industry is rife with callous cruelty, and horses are considered just as much a product as animals living in factory farms. Audiences can sip

cocktails and dress up, but the darkest lipstick can’t blot out the facts: attendance at these events supports abuse. There’s nothing glamorous about it: it’s as filthy as a factory farm, and it stinks just as badly.

This picture led to a felony charge for this jockey. He was caught using an illegal shock device after winning a race in Texas.



Pressure to win, and huge prizes, mean horses are abused as laws are broken. Photo Credit: Equine Ink

Racing requires horses with very rare and specific abilities, so Toy, like most, was spared this fate. However, racing is only one way horses are exploited and abused. Life as a carriage horse in urban areas, for example, is lonely and arduous and incredibly unnatural. In New York City there are about 200 licensed horses that pull carriages for tourists. Most circle Central Park endlessly. Many carriage horses are purchased from country farms where they have already spent years working. When they cannot perform farm functions due to age, their owners sell them to a new position rather than retire them. Workhorses are, after all, a tool to them. Why not sell it and make money, rather than spend money to care for it?

For years, activists, politicians, and concerned citizens have fought to ban horse-drawn carriages in cities like New York. Here, as in most cities, they



work long, 9-hour days, pounding asphalt pavement on feet designed to walk on soft surfaces. For 9 hours, they breathe in toxic fumes from buses, cars, and trucks. Horses are naturally skittish, and cities are noisy and crowded. Sudden noises and sights—ambulances, horns, bikers whizzing by—can terrify horses. Drivers don't always pay attention. In fact, in 2020, a 10-year-old horse named Aisha was filmed as she stumblingly collapsed onto the ground in Central Park, too weak to stand. She was euthanized later that week. She isn't the only one: another incident on film saw a horse collapse after running into a parked car, which later backed on to her where she lay.



Injured carriage horses are often euthanized. Photo: Emery Reddy

The number of accidents involving horses on urban streets confirms that a horse-drawn carriage has no place in a 21st century city. By night, the horses are housed alone in stalls, sometimes too small to lay down and stretch out completely. For five weeks each year, they are sent to farms where they can run—before returning to their city life. Horses are herd animals. They aren't meant to be alone, and they aren't meant to perform repetitive duties in unnatural conditions, like circling the same loop all day, every day. A life like this is so frustrating for a horse that the effects are physical. Horses will pace, rock back and forth, and bite the bars of their stalls out of boredom, confusion, fear...and loneliness.

What happens when carriage a horse can no longer work? Between 2005-2013, 529 carriage horses were removed from the registry in NYC. But no one will say where they went, citing privacy rights as a

lame excuse. This is very concerning. Unbelievably, *horse slaughter for meat is not illegal across the USA*. The only reason horse slaughterhouses no longer exist is because the USDA requires inspections, but began making slaughterhouse owners pay the fees themselves. This clause shuttered the last horse slaughterhouse in the USA. Now, the exportation of live horses to other countries—for slaughter—has replaced that industry. In fact, in 2019, according to data from the Observatory of Economic Complexity, the United States exported \$355 million of horses—making it the 4th largest horse-exporting country in the world. The largest audience? Japan. Next up is Mexico, Canada, the UK, and New Zealand. These countries do NOT have laws against slaughtering horses for human consumption. And so, the horse industry makes money off these animals, even in their death. And remember...we don't know where those carriage horses go. (You'll soon notice this is a pattern within the industry.)

Culturally, horses straddle the line between beloved, iconic animal, and marketable product. It's a strange position that does the horse no favors. In the United States, wild horses symbolize rugged freedom and untamable nature. We admire mustangs and like to compare the American spirit to theirs. Except, apparently, when they're in the way. The government has been killing and rounding up wild horses, citing overpopulation concerns. However, there's another broadly-accepted reason: ranchers graze their ever-growing herds of cattle on the same food sources. Many believe that horses are being removed to reduce resource competition (Interestingly, lobbyists for cattle ranchers contributed about \$1 million to various politicians in 2020.) Ranchers themselves have been known to shoot horses that wander on to their property.

The government gathers wild horses and sells them. These "gatherings" or really, round ups, are done by helicopters, which swoop down so close they almost clip the horses as they run in fear. Natural prey animals, the noise adds to their terror—but that's the point. Pilots follow the frightened herds, driving them into "trap areas."



Horses bond as closely as we do with our families. Imagine: a herd wakes in their familiar home and goes about business as usual when they're ambushed. Mothers struggle to keep their children together amid the confusion while trying to evade this terrifying machine. Some are so eager to get away from the helicopter that they don't notice the barbed wire fences around the trap areas, and run right into them, falling over, breaking bones, cutting up their faces on the razor-sharp wire. Formerly wild horses will now be held in trap pens until a buyer comes to take them. Scared, many stallions will fight viciously in the enclosed space. Survivors are transported in crowded, inhumane conditions over thousands of miles. Just a few minutes earlier, they had all been grazing peacefully.



For this horse, this helicopter is the end of a free life. Slaughter is inescapable. Photo credit: American Wild Horse Campaign.

Laws are in place to stipulate that those wild-caught horses cannot “knowingly” be sold to buyers who plan to sell them for slaughter. Yet each year, there are about 80,000-100,000 horses exported from our country. Almost every industry denies these sales so then...where do the horses come from?

Removing wild horses from wild lands due to overpopulation is inhumane and makes no sense: Shelters are full of dogs and cats due to overpopulation. But, as beloved pets, we would never condone exporting them to a country for slaughter and consumption. Who is protecting our horses? Why aren't they afforded the same kindness?

Horse shows and rodeos are some of the cruelest forms of “entertainment” out there. By now, some cities have banned rodeos or at least made them impossible by banning the cruel tools of the trade, tool that are designed around the premise that a horse in pain puts on a better show. “Bucking straps,” are belts tightened around a horse's midsections that hurt their skin and genitals. Riders kick with sharpened spurs with round, spiked, wheels called rowels. Dressage horses are forced to wear painful mouth bits. “Soring,” using physical or chemical methods to cause *extreme* pain in the feet (to alter a horse' walking style) is illegal, but like most sports with prize money, cheating occurs. The difference? The horse has no choice but to suffer the painful, sometimes deadly, consequences of these cheaters.

Tennessee Walking Horses suffer specifically from “the big lick,” an event so nonsensical, its existence is hard to fathom: horses, with a rider wearing an old-fashioned suit, walk around a ring, lifting their legs high with each step. To get those high leg lifts, horses wear 8-pound, stacked shoes and foot chains. Their legs are burned with caustic chemicals so they will lift their legs high with each step—to avoid the chains that slam on their injuries. Despite huge public outcry, neither these shows—nor the shoes—have been outlawed. (Interestingly, the Tennessee Walking Horse Org contributed \$90,000 to various parties in 2020.) When show horses age or suffer injuries because of these savage implements, they are sold. By now, you can guess where they wind up.

In fact, Apache, Toy's rescued friend, had been an entertainment horse. For years, she was forced to perform in a “wild wild west” style show, despite obvious signs of pain. By the time Apache arrived here, she had arthritis due to stress placed on an already broken knee. In other words, she was likely given painkillers and forced to perform for some time on a broken limb. Due only to audience complaint, her owners decided it was time to retire her. We rescued her just a week before she was slated for auction and most likely, slaughter.

The last—and possibly the worst—abuse horses suffer comes from pharmaceutical giant Pfizer.



The urine of pregnant mares is used to make estrogen substitutes. “Premarin Mares” are repeatedly impregnated and spend up to 12 years in stalls too small to turn around in. They must stand without turning 24/7 for 6 of the 11 months they’re pregnant, although horses sleep lying down. They’re denied adequate water (to concentrate urine) and wear a rubber urine-bag at all times, which causes burns and lesions. They cannot run or socialize. And their babies? Females join the workforce. Males and tired mares are auctioned off. Can you guess who buys them in large numbers?



A Premarin horse farm. Horses' back legs are restrained to capture urine, which prevents all movement. Photo credit: Change.org

Sadly, Pfizer expanded their farming operations to China. In 2014, there were about 800 Premarin horses in the USA...but about 90,000 in China. Theirs is a long, hellish life, and it's no less barbaric than bear bile farms.

The reality is...our country is hypocritical when it comes to horses. We admire their regal beauty and wild nature, while exploiting, abusing, and even killing these loyal friends. We can do better.

Horse meat sales in France have dropped 60% in the last year. In 1970, the Horse Protection Act was made into law to ban soring in the US. And just this year, in 2021, Congress passed a bill to BAN the transport of horses across state lines or into Mexico and Canada—effectively ending the sale of horses for slaughter. Once the Senate passes it...the bill will become a law. But we still have a way to go to make things right for the horses we love and hold in such high esteem.

Today, we don't know where Toy's babies ended up, or if she has outlived them already—and neither does she. But we do know that we changed the world—for Toy and Apache. With your help, we can make the future a kinder, gentler place for other horses like them, and give these majestic animals the respect and love they deserve.



Toy and Apache, BFFs free to stroll through Tamerlaine's winter wonderland together.