

Wandering horse turns up at woman's corral

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LAS CRUCES - You might call it a horse with no name - at least not one that's known. And it indeed may have wandered through the bit of desert next to Amanda Chisholm's home before stopping just outside the corrals that hold three of her own horses.

Chisholm, 32, first discovered the unexpected equine visitor around 7 a.m. Wednesday, when some contractors working on the exterior of her East Mesa home knocked on her door to report that one of her horses had escaped.

But when Chisholm checked, her own animals were still in their stalls. There was, however, a new brown horse with a black mane that was pestering them from outside the fence.

Chisholm, who grew up around horses, said after about 20 minutes she was able to lure the horse with some feed.

"I caught him, and once I had him with a halter, he followed me without a problem," she said. "He's happy as a clam now. He thinks he's made some friends."

Chisholm, an animal science student at New Mexico State University, said she didn't recognize the horse as a neighborhood regular. It seemed in good health, and its hooves had been trimmed in recent weeks. She found a brand on its neck, unusual because the markings are more often on the hip. After some investigation, Chisholm learned the brand is a type used by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's wild horse adoption program. The horse is a mustang.

Because of that, Chisholm said, it will be possible to track the original owner. But she said the gelding is about a decade old and could have changed hands several times since its original purchase. She said she's awaiting a call back from a livestock inspector to find out more.

In the meantime, Chisholm said she's hoping to find out why the animal wandered onto her rented property. It may have escaped from someone - she recounted how someone used to open the pen of daughter's pony and let it out when no one was home - or the owner may have abandoned it.

About a quarter of a mile away from Chisholm's home off Jefferson Lane is the expanse of desert that sits between Las Cruces and the Organ Mountains. And while some people might think that was a good place to abandon a horse, Chisholm said she'd consider that abuse.

Beth Vesco-Mock, director of the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley, said the shelter does take in horses along with dogs and cats. She said the last one to be turned into the shelter was around February or March of last year.

While Chisholm likes horses, she said it's already "touch and go" buying hay for the three animals she's got, partly because she had a problem this fall with people stealing hay bales from the property. She said she's seeking donations to help care for the extra horse until its owner or an adopter step forward.

"Somebody has been taking care of him," she said. "That's why I think he got out, versus somebody turning him out."

Michel Meunier, president of ACTion Programs for Animals, learned about the wandering horse after Chisholm sought help from the group's pet food bank. Meunier admitted APA doesn't get too many calls from people seeking horse feed, but the group's aim is to help out when they can. So far, she said, one woman has volunteered to provide some alfalfa.

"If we get any feed this week, I'll set it aside and give it to her," Meunier said.

Anyone wanting to donate horse feed can contact APA at (575) 644-0505. To reach Chisholm, contact her at (575) 312-8558.

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To help

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