



# Georgia Equine Rescue League, Ltd.

*With Your Help...We Will Make a Difference!*

## The Story of Blaze

*By Debra Young*

I was brand spanking new to the foster program with GERL. BJ Morris and Ann-Maxwell Searcy, the Fannin & Gilmer County Coordinators had inspected and approved my ranch in October, 2010 for foster care. Gaited horses have been a part of my life for years; needless to say, I was excited and honored to be approved.

Becky Gregory, the Foster Coordinator, called me the week of December

15th about fostering two seven year old mares that were to be seized by the GDA. She informed me that one of the mares was in very poor condition with a hoof abscess, and that both of the mares were rated a 1.5 condition. BJ called me and said she and I would be picking up three horses - two mares for me and one young gelding for her.

We pulled up to the homestead where we found seven horses being kept in the front yard no more than a 1/4 acre. It was on a slope, ankle deep in mud and manure, no fresh water source. Ray Ziebell met us there to help with the transfer of ownership, loading and to give me meds/care instructions. He was holding a lead rope for the injured, very thin mare, Blaze - her right, front hoof was heavily bandaged - the entire leg was swollen, she rolled her hoof over to walk and the left knee was showing the effect of bearing too much weight. The vet had taken a large nail out the day before. The owner of these horses was standing nearby crying saying how she was going to miss them, especially Ginger, the other mare I was going to foster. Ginger stood next to her with a light weight coat on - I didn't take a look under the coat until we got to my ranch.



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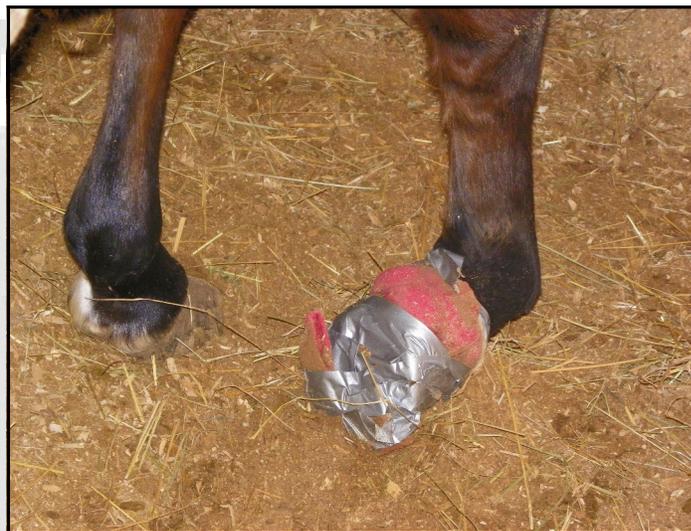
Blaze was doing her best to stand, and the walk from the driveway to the horse trailer was painfully arduous. We wondered if she could make the step up - she surprised us by loading with little trouble. The question was could she stand for the trip. The other two horses loaded without incident. The still weeping owner had followed us to the trailer, and I assured her that I would take care of them like my own. BJ and I were peeved that she could be so sad, and yet let them get into this condition! Animal cruelty has different faces, but they are all ugly. BJ and I took off for my ranch - we had to stop twice to make sure Blaze was still standing.

We arrived at my ranch, unloaded the two mares and BJ took off for her place. When Mac, my boyfriend, and I came back down to the barn to soak and rebandage Blaze's hoof, she was laying down in the stall resting. Who knows when the last time was she had gotten to lay down and rest. The stench when we took the dressing off was enough to knock us over! I have seen many hoof abscesses, but this one was horrendous! It had to hurt, but Blaze was every bit the lady - no kicking, biting or moving - she stood there with her leg in a five gallon bucket while we petted her. After 20 minutes of soaking, I put a heavy bandage on and went to take a good look at Ginger, the other mare.

I removed the light weight coat from Ginger, and my mouth fell open! Her back and sides were covered with horse bites and mange! Some bites were open wounds, others trying to heal and she was pitifully thin. The cold weather prohibited a good bath, so we gave her a horse spritz bath, applied antibiotic salve, put a cleaner coat on her and gave her some much needed petting.

Dr. Zager with Ocoee Vet was scheduled to come out, but in the meantime, we continued with the soaking, antibiotics, probiotics, salve and prescribed feeding program. In a couple of days, Dr. Zager assessed Blaze - it was very serious - the infection had gone up her leg, he thought the bone maybe involved, but wanted to give her a chance. He changed her antibiotics, and instructed me to use a poly pipe he had cut in half to try and keep her hoof outstretched. Dr. Zager said if Blaze made it, her name should be Noel - from that day on we called her Noel. He arrived two days later, and decided to debrade the entire hoof - thank goodness he put her out. Dr. Zager didn't have a helper, so it was up to Mac and I to assist him. I have a newfound respect for vet's assistants :) I was to continue with the soaking, heavy bandage and poly

pipe. The pipe was not working. She continued to roll her ankle over, so I came up with a new idea - pipe insulating cuff. First wrap the hoof and ankle in cotton batting then take the largest size pipe insulator, cut it to hit a couple of inches below the knee and use duct tape to keep it all in place. Low and behold, Noel started bearing weight on the toe of her injured hoof! We were so excited! Dr. Zager warned us that she had a long way to go.



Dr. Zager called to let me know he was coming out for a recheck. Just by coincidence, I thought, my good friends, BJ and Ann-Maxwell, showed up before he did. He removed the bandages, and showed me how her tendon had atrophied - he was going to have to put her down. My Dad was out to help me clean the barn out, so we had to decide where to bury her - I cried like a baby. My good friends had been to Dr. Zager's office earlier, and knew there was a good chance Noel would have to be put down, so came out to offer moral support - I am blessed to call them friends. We laid her down in a small pasture behind my barn. She went out like a lady - quietly, sweetly. I called another friend to come out to bury her the next morning, so my Dad and I covered her with a tarp, weighed it down with stones and said our goodbyes - it was January 4th.

Noel didn't deserve the life she had, but I can tell you the last days of her life were spent in a small pasture by the barn, laying in the sun, munching on grass and hay, bedding down in a clean foaling stall with fresh water and lots of TLC. She was no trouble, but a blessing. I want to thank GERL for allowing me to care of her.

By the way, Ginger is doing great! The hair is growing back, she has put on 80#+, and thinks she is living at the Ritz Carlton - LOL!