



# Georgia Equine Rescue League, Ltd.

With Your Help ...  
We Will Make A Difference

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[www.gerlltd.org](http://www.gerlltd.org)

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## One of the "If Only" Cases By Susan Archer

The name on his registration certificate was "Lucky Jet". He was a nine year old American Quarter Horse. His Coggins was negative and current, vaccinations were up to date, and he wore a set of new shoes. I state these facts because having them in mind makes it hard to imagine the rest of this story.

It was a rainy and freezing Sunday night about a week ago. My husband, Ken and I received a call from our vet, Dr. Erin Brown from Countryside Animal Hospital in Jersey . She told us that she was around the corner from our farm at a small boarding barn with two emaciated horses that needed immediate and intensive care. She knew that we were very active with GERL and that if these horses, especially Jet, were to survive the night, our help would be needed.



Wanting to help in any way we could, Ken and I jumped into our truck and went over to the barn as quickly as possible. The scene that met us was unexpected and it is difficult for me to remember, much less describe. Jet was standing in the dim light of the barn with his muzzle almost on the floor. Ken and I have been members of the Rescue League since it began and have seen many "before" and "after" pictures of starving horses but the sight of this extremely thin and weak animal, in the flesh, right before our eyes, simply broke our hearts.

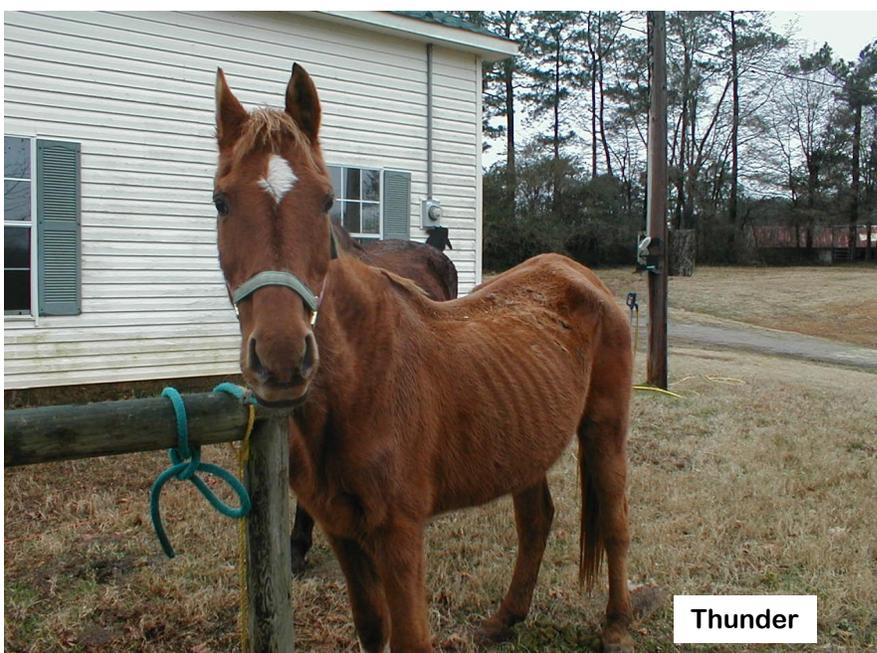
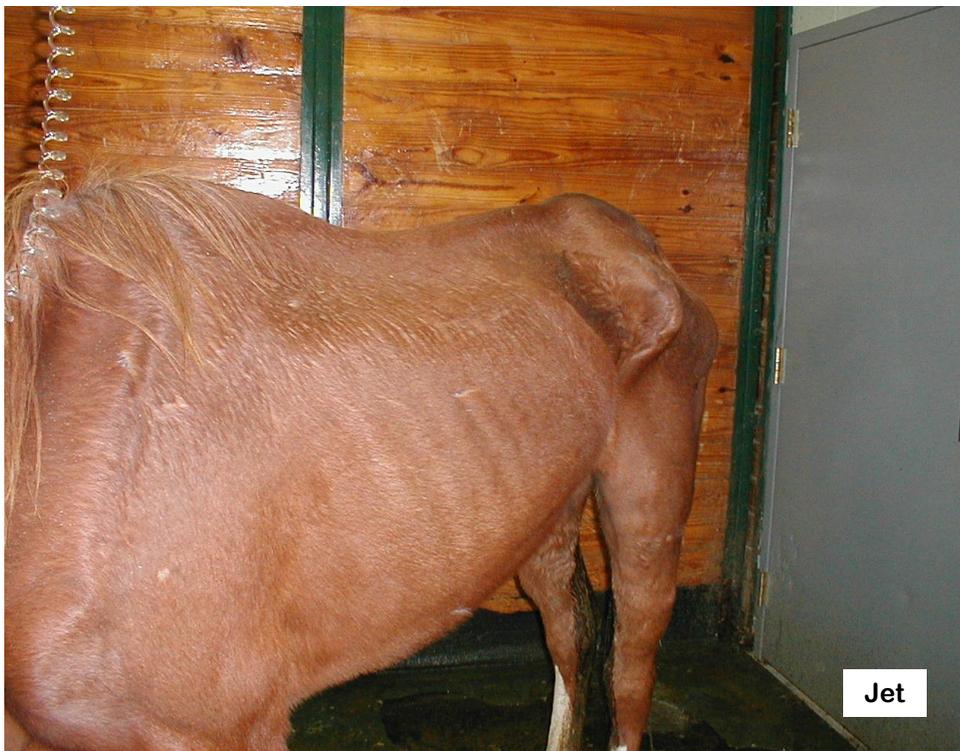
### One of the "If Only" Cases (continued from the cover)

The horse was about 16 hands tall. He was chestnut in color and had a lovely blaze and white socks. It occurred to me that just a few months earlier, he must have been a beautiful horse.

As we worked, we tried to piece together the events that led us to this sad scene. We were told that Jet's owner boarded three horses at this barn. Except for what grass they could find in the pasture, they had received no supplemental feeding for the past four months. Dr. Brown had been called to the barn that night because Jet was having severe diarrhea which he had suffered for the past week or more. He had been down in the pasture, unable to get up. The manager of the barn and

some other boarders somehow managed to get him up and into a stall. It is our understanding that the owner had been notified of Jet's deteriorating condition and had come by on Friday. On the following Sunday, she picked up her trailer and told the barn manager that she no longer wanted the three horses and he could do whatever he wanted with them. At this point, he called Dr. Brown. Realizing that Jet was critical and would need IVs during the night, Dr. Brown advised that the horse be immediately transported to Countryside Veterinary Hospital. I telephoned GERL President, Patty Livingston who assured us that GERL would pay for the needed care. We got the horse loaded onto a trailer and were on our way with very hopeful hearts. We also took Jet's pasture mate, Thunder. It was determined that he had a body score of two. Although very thin, he was not in nearly as serious condition as Jet and would survive. He is now in a GERL foster home and doing well. The third horse belonging to this uncaring owner is in good condition and has been signed over to GERL but is not yet in our custody.

Back to Jet. A body score of one or below was assigned by Dr. Brown. He should have weighed around 1100 to 1200 pounds but was closer to 700 pounds. The diarrhea continued and Dr. Brown started IV's with electrolytes and other additives in an effort to slow the bowels and give him some energy. Tests revealed that his blood components were quite depleted so he received a bag of plasma in an effort to boost and stabilize the hemoglobin. He rallied slightly. Ken and I went home knowing that "where there is life, there is hope" but we knew there was very little of either.



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On Monday morning, Dr. Fuller called to tell us that the prognosis was not good. I begged Ken not to give up quite yet for I had seen a small flicker of the will to live in Jet's eyes. After discussions with the Countryside Vets on Monday, it was decided that we would keep trying for another day. I prayed very hard that night that Jet would make it and somehow have a chance to be the beautiful, wonderful horse that we were told he had been.

On Tuesday, Ken and I went to Countryside to visit Jet. It was not a surprise that we found him very weak and were told that he had gone down in the stall during the night. He was again receiving plasma. Everyone at Countryside was working hard and pulling for this horse which had been abandoned so cruelly by his caregivers. Needless to say, very high emotions concerning these events were being felt by everyone, especially me. I could not get it out of my mind that these three horses were living just around the corner from my fat, spoiled and well cared for horses, while Jet was literally starving to death! We had no idea. Still, we had to control our sadness and anger as we kept working to save him.

Ken was making calls trying to borrow a body sling while Dr. Billy Myers was making arrangements to obtain some scaffolding to support Jet in the sling. About that time, we received news that the GDA Equine Division wanted to help try to save Jet. They have a sling and all of the equipment needed to care for a horse in this condition. They also have years of experience in bringing starved horses back from the brink of death. The Vets at Countryside graciously agreed to continue treating Jet at the GDA Mansfield Impound. Robin Easley from the Department of Agriculture phoned and told us that she and Equine Inspectors Adrienne and Megan were on their way with the GDA truck, trailer and board/skid to pull him out of the stall and onto the trailer. I remember looking up at the sky and saying "THANK YOU LORD"!

For the average lay person, the process of moving a horse that can not walk or even stand was a pretty traumatic sight to behold. The "GDA GIRLS" came right in and went to work like the pros they are and we were able, with the help of several from the hospital, to carefully drag Jet onto the skid and into the trailer.

We were thankful that Jet seemed to tolerate the 45 minute trip. A Gator (small off- road vehicle) was used to pull the skid and Jet off of the trailer and into the hall of the barn where The Anderson Sling was rigged

and waiting. After considerable but unsuccessful effort by several people working together to try to help Jet stand, it became evident that he was growing weaker. It was decided to let him rest for awhile. I made a warm mash and was able to get a little into him and he drank a little warm water. At this point, a check of his body temperature revealed that, in spite of the fact that he was receiving warmed IV infusions; his temperature had dropped to a dangerous level. After one last effort to help him, we knew that he was just too tired and weak to stand, even with the help of the sling. We could see that he was not responding. At this point, Jet was bedded down on fresh shavings and covered with blankets. It was our hope that, after some rest and more IV fluids, he would gain enough strength to stand up in the sling the next morning. We all sadly bid goodnight to our stoic friend and prayed that God would be kind to him either way.

A very strange thing happened to me during the wee hours of Wednesday morning. I don't know how you feel about "connecting" and Karma but I think Jet did bid me "adieu" on his way across the Rainbow Bridge. For some reason, while in a sound sleep, my left leg was kicked like the devil (enough to knock it off of the side of the bed) which immediately woke me. I wondered to myself what in the dickens had just happened and then I thought about Jet. I looked at the ceiling and said quietly out loud, "He is Gone". I knew it as surely as I have ever known anything.



## **One of the "If Only" Cases**

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We received the call first thing Wednesday morning ... Jet had passed on sometime during the night, very quietly and peacefully. I can only hope in my heart that he forgives us for putting him through the stress of being trussed up, put on a skid, dragged onto a trailer and then enduring our efforts to help him stand. My prayer is that he knew we were trying to SAVE him and not do him any more harm.

At this point I cannot say enough wonderful things about the Countryside Animal Hospital doctors and employees, especially Mandy and her friend Ernie who even came to the Impound to help. The GDA was fabulous. We knew they wouldn't let us down just like we have not, and will never, let them down. Finally, last but not least, I must express my great appreciation to GERL for giving Ken and I the opportunity to be involved in this huge effort to save just one more horse ... for it is only with the help of GERL that we were able to try so hard to make a difference for Jet. "If Only" we had gotten there sooner  
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### **Editorial comment by Anne Ensminger, GERL Secretary:**

Why do we suppose that Susan did not write about consequences for the owner of these horses or the barn manager who most certainly watched Jet's condition get to this critical point before taking action? I suppose that she is wise enough to realize that it would do nothing to change things. While we are very proud of our Georgia laws which are designed to protect equine from this kind of abuse, the reality is that, at the present time, there are very few legal avenues that will bring remedy after the fact. GERL is pleased to be able to help these equine victims in many ways but sadly, we must leave the punishment of humans who cause such tragedies, to the good Lord and to their personal, greatly lacking, value systems.