



The horse rescuer

Anne Tempelman-Kluit

Call him “horse doctor,” and Ray Kellosalmi takes it as a compliment. This slight, soft-spoken GP, who has a thriving practice in Peachland, BC, is a horse lover whose enthusiasm for the animals extends far beyond riding.

In the last decade Kellosalmi and his wife, Noreen Nawrocki — she is a director of The Responsible Animal Care Society (TRACS) — have rescued hundreds of horses. These days they care for about a dozen at their 4-hectare Kelowna ranch, which has been functioning as a sanctuary since 1987.

After hitching up his horse trailer, Kellosalmi has been known to drive half-way across Canada to bring back a horse — or horses — in need of help. Some of his 4-legged patients are abused or problem animals, and some come from people who can no longer care for them. In the past 5 years, however, he has been buying many foals at auctions involving horses raised to produce pregnant mare urine.

The resulting product, Premarin, is used as menopausal estrogen replacement therapy. Many of the horses used in the process are kept on special farms in Manitoba. Because only the urine of pregnant mares can be used, an estimated 60 000 “Premarkin foals” are born in Canada every year. Some females are kept as stock, some find homes and about 45 000 are sold at auction every year. Many of the auctioned foals, which are mostly unweaned and about 3 months old, are sold for as little as \$100 for pet food, or shipped to France and Japan where they will be sold for meat.

Kellosalmi, who has studied hormone-replacement therapy extensively, is staunchly opposed to the use of horses for this purpose. He argues that many other effective synthetic and plant-based forms of estrogen replacement are available, and therefore foals don't need to be

born “just to die”; Premarin was first developed in the 1930s by Wyeth-Ayerst. Kellosalmi has been raising the issue in both medical and horse-related publications. He says he is willing to take a stand because his profession lends credibility to his concerns. Besides, he argues, this is a problem for which a simple solution already exists.

Kellosalmi — a vegetarian for 25 of his 50 years — buys anywhere from 10 to 100 foals at an auction. He bids only against “meat buyers,” and never against people who want to give a foal a home.

“The meat buyers don't like what we're doing because it drives up their prices,” he says calmly. “But we're trying to give these animals a future, a life.”

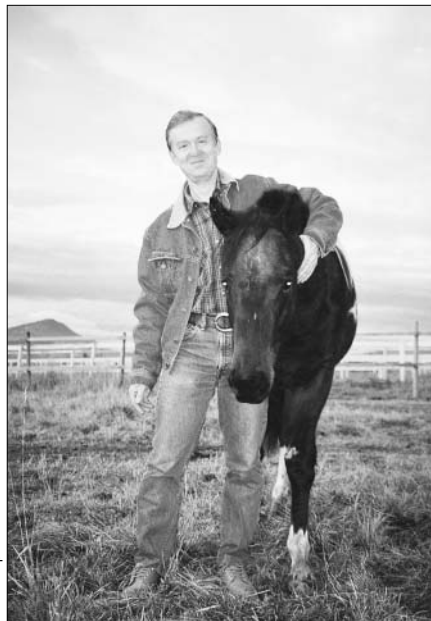
Organizations from as far away as New York and California take many of the foals; 133 found homes in California in 1998. TRACS also buys and finds homes for many foals, some of which are moved directly to the US. Others rest at Kellosalmi's sanctuary while homes are being found.

“We screen people carefully,” explains Kellosalmi, who was born in Finland and graduated from UBC in 1973. “We're looking for ‘forever

homes' for the horses. We don't want people who want a horse to boost their ego or make money. We find people who want a companion, a pet, a friend.”

And if the animals can't be placed, they may wind up spending their lives at the Kellosalmi sanctuary, which costs about \$9000 a year to operate. “Unfortunately, 12 is about our limit,” he says, stroking a small foal that is following him around the paddock like a large dog. “We can't take care of all the horses in the world.”

Whatever his day in the office holds, Kellosalmi never misses tucking his horses in at night. “Each one gets an apple or a pat. My horses are my hobby and my therapy. You can't ask more than that.” ?



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Dr. Ray Kellosalmi: 4-legged patients