

**The Stafford County Morgans** - Humane Investigation Report  
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This report is a summary of my observations and findings as a consultant and treatment veterinarian in the investigation of the thirty-two horses on a property outside of Fredericksburg, Virginia in Stafford County on April 26, 1991.  
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Upon entering the property with the Animal Control Officers, and after the Sheriff's Deputies served a warrant upon the owner, I observed the following:

1. No evidence of regular continued feeding of hay or feed to 32 horses (including 3 foals) that were on an over-grazed field of approximately 30 acres in size. No feed buckets, feed in storage, or trampled fed hay were found in the fields or in the farm buildings.
2. A very thin stallion (#1) in a stall with no feed or water with only manure for bedding.
3. There were another 32 horses on the property in a field. Except for the two nursing foals, none of the horses were in good condition, and approximately 80% of the horses were in extremely poor body weight condition. (Body condition from 1 to 2 on a scale of 1 to 10.) (All of the one and two-year old horses were in the poorest condition, indicating they were not able to effectively compete with the larger or older horses for what little food was available.) The two nursing foals were in normal good condition because they were nursing their dams which will continue to provide milk despite inadequate feed or in the face of starvation.
4. The field had been over-grazed for a long period of time as evidenced by a very short height of grass (approximately 1/2" to 1") over the entire field which normally would be 4" to 8" at this time if not overgrazed.
5. The majority of the horses had bacterial and fungal skin infections ("RainScald" and "Ringworm") over large portions of their bodies with no evidence of treatment.
6. Several horses had infected wounds, with no evidence of being treated medically.
7. Two horse carcasses were found in the field, both of which were found with signs of protracted struggling to rise before death as evidenced by the earth being trenched under their hooves. There were no bullet holes in the skulls. These carcasses are an unsanitary condition for the other horses.
8. Debris of many types including barbed wire, electric wire, boards with protruding nails and sharp-edged farm equipment were found around the barns and in the fields. These objects constituted a hazard to the health of the horses.
9. Manure was analyzed for internal parasite eggs (and roundworm and strongyle eggs were found at high levels).
10. The horses were very weak when handled.

Based on these observations, it was painfully obvious that the horses were suffering from starvation and/or chronic malnutrition and heavy parasitism that had occurred over the

winter and early spring months, and that this had led to a debilitated state leaving them susceptible to the skin infections that were made worse by lack of adequate shelter and probably caused the death of the two horse carcasses found in the field. Inadequate veterinary care and unsanitary and unsafe conditions also existed. For example, the high level of parasitism could easily have been avoided by a regular deworming schedule. This lack of care and feeding is a type of animal cruelty.

The horses were seized to protect them from the eminent danger posed by their continued lack of nutrition and adequate veterinary care. The horses were dewormed upon loading into trailers for transportation to the Equine Rescue League's farm shelter where proper veterinary and nutritional care was begun. Forty-eight hours after deworming, large numbers of parasites were seen being passed in the manure of the horses and one colt passed so many worms that it became colicky due to an impaction of worms. The horses were beginning to gain weight. The horses were especially interested in the salt licks, indicating they had not been given any for some time and many did not appear to be familiar with what grain or feed pellets were.

One horse (#27), a chestnut 2-year old colt was so severely debilitated and suffering lameness from an old injury to his right hock which would never heal properly, and because he had a wound on his withers that had not healed over the past three months, it was determined to be necessary to humanely destroy the horse to prevent its further suffering.