

Horse's mouth

Special edition - Princess



*Goodbye
little Princess*

Princess - in loving memory

In the last newsletter we brought you the story of Princess's last chance. Tragically, Princess could not be saved and had to be put to sleep on June 9th 2010.



We will all miss Princess, but her legacy must be that we continue to fight to help other miniature horses suffering the same dreadful cruelty that ultimately killed our beautiful Princess.

In this special newsletter, we want to celebrate the good times with Princess, while sharing her sad story in the hope that it will inspire more people to help in the fight against all animal cruelty.

This suffering does not need to happen and should not happen.

Princess's final fight

We did everything we could, but in the end even the most specialist vet in Spain could not help Princess...

Princess came to us in May 2009 suffering the effects of appalling neglect and mistreatment. Years of poor quality food and lack of care had left her with severe laminitis (a chronic inflammatory condition), permanent disability and persistent infections.

Over the 13 months she spent with us, Princess fought a constant battle against infection in her hooves.

But with medication and daily draining and cleaning to keep the infection in check, Princess, for a long time, was able to live happily.

Despite the years of mistreatment she had endured, Princess was an affectionate little horse who loved people.

She made it clear she enjoyed life at the centre. We always knew that she wanted to live and that the battle to keep her going was worthwhile.

Toward the end, though, the battle was getting tougher. The medication stopped working and the infection became impossible to control. Without drastic action, Princess could not continue.

That is when we heard of a horse vet in Barcelona who is doing incredible work with horses that other vets cannot help. We agonised about taking Princess to Barcelona, but finally decided that we owed it to her to do everything possible.

The vet, Gaspar Castelijns, has had great

success rebuilding damaged hooves, and regularly performs surgery other vets believe impossible. He has been able to remove hooves, take away the damaged area, rebuild bone and re-attach the hoof.

As soon as Gaspar saw Princess, he realised she was a fighter and an intelligent little horse. He could see that she had taught herself to cope with her disability well, and vowed to do everything he could to save her.

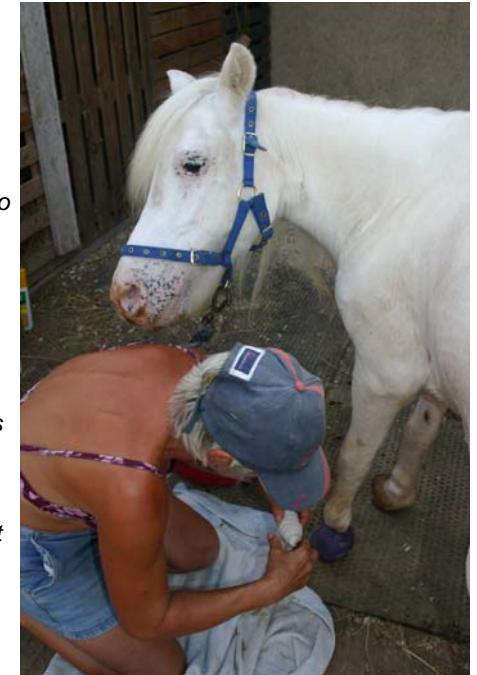
Tests and X-rays showed that Princess had shrunken tendons in her feet, caused by the stance she had adopted to minimise pain when standing.

It would have been wrong to let Princess struggle on any longer

She had osteoporosis in both front legs, caused by her lack of mobility and therefore lack of exercise. Plus, both pedal bones were eroded through disease.

Right: Princess's hooves had to be treated daily to fight the infection

Left: A hoist was used to hold Princess up and keep her comfortable while her feet were treated



Gaspar said he could overcome all of these problems as long as Princess had good blood flow to her legs.

let her struggle on for a few more weeks. We made the heartbreaking decision to have Princess put to sleep.

While her blood flow was being checked, Princess was sedated and lying on her side. She started dreaming and whinnied with her legs moving as though she was running.

We knew she was having a lovely dream, and as the injection was given to put her to sleep she was still groggy and half lost in her dream.



How we found our Princess



Princess was living in misery and facing a brutal death at the hands of a local butcher...

Our first sight of Princess was truly shocking. She was in a tiny enclosure outside a butcher's

livestock shack and slaughter house along with two other miniature horses. She showed

signs of serious neglect, could barely walk and had hooves that curled upward, like Dutch clogs,

from years of neglect.

The butcher was fattening the three horses up on stale bread and scraps of rotting vegetables, ready for slaughter. Incredibly, while they waited to be turned into horsemeat, the butcher let his young grandchildren use the horses as toys – riding on their backs even though they could barely walk.

When challenged, the butcher showed no sign that he could see anything wrong with his treatment of these animals. He laughed at their inability to walk and boasted about how much his grandchildren 'loved them'.

The situation was desperate, and there was no way we could get the authorities to take action in time. Even though the butcher should have had the horses seized and been prosecuted for animal cruelty, we reluctantly bought the three horses from him.

The eldest horse, Angel, was in the worst

Princess could barely walk and had hooves that curled upward like Dutch clogs

condition, and sadly only survived a month after being rescued. She at least knew love and care in her final days. Magic, the youngest, suffered damage that has left her

with a permanent limp. It doesn't bother her too much, though, and she is a lively, boisterous little horse. She continues to live very happily at the centre.

Right: Princess with Magic



Below: Magic today lives very happily at the centre



Angel at the butcher's



Magic and Angel



Happy days in the garden

Despite her problems, Princess loved life...

Princess couldn't walk well enough to go into the fields with Magic and the other miniature horses, but she liked nothing better than finding a shady spot in the garden.

There she had the company of Charity the donkey, Isadora the pig, and assorted dogs, chickens, geese and a duck. Plus, all the visitors to the centre. Princess stole everyone's heart.

In the last weeks of

Princess's life, another badly treated miniature arrived at the centre. The new arrival, Cookie, and Princess became inseparable.

They shared a stable and would constantly nuzzle and groom each other.

Cookie could not go out into the fields either, so they would be in each other's company day and night.

It was lovely to see Princess so happy with her new companion. It is now desperately sad seeing Cookie alone, mourning her best friend.

Main photo: Princess in the garden with Isadora

Below: with volunteer Justin, who cared for Princess last summer

Bottom: Princess nuzzling Cookie



The worst case the vet had ever seen

We only wish that we could say the same...

Gaspar could not believe his eyes when he first saw Princess at his clinic, Clinica Equihealth Veterinarios. He said it was the worst case he had ever seen.

In Barcelona, where animals in general and horses in particular are better cared for, it would be unlikely for a

horse to suffer the degree of neglect that Princess had.

Gaspar was shocked when we told him that here in the Vega Baja there are scores, if not hundreds, of minis like Princess.

During the time we have been running the rescue centre we have become more and more

aware of the problem. It seems that in just about every village, and on every piece of rough ground, there is a miniature horse neglected and in ill health.

We already have a number of miniatures at the centre, and are constantly being called on to help more.



Princess's legacy

Princess's death must be made to count...

Princess's bravery and loving nature touched many people, and she will be remembered for a long time to come. But we want her life to really mean something, so hope that her story will inspire people to stand against animal cruelty, wherever they find it.

Particularly, we are hoping that Princess's story will help highlight the plight of many miniature horses here in Spain. Although Princess's story is shocking, what is more

shocking is that it is not unusual. There are many miniatures living lives of unimaginable suffering.

Miniature horses are particularly vulnerable to mistreatment as their small size makes people think they will be easy to look after. They are seen as being more like large dogs than horses. This attitude is encouraged by unscrupulous pet shops that sell miniature horses from cages alongside cats and dogs.

Miniature horses often

end up tied up outside houses, or on rough ground, fed on scraps and left pretty much to fend for themselves. They are not given even the basic essentials: space to exercise, a suitable diet, regular farrier visits and the attention of an equine vet.

After a few years they will almost certainly be debilitated with laminitis – a painful inflammatory condition that affects the membranes in the hooves and leaves horses lame. The main

cause of laminitis is the cheap, high carb diet of stale bread and corn that many minis are fed.

Once a horse is sick and deformed, it is often sold for meat, or simply abandoned to die. Some will be kept for breeding, producing foals even when they can barely stand. Invariably, the foals will be destined for a similar fate.

With Princess's death we are more determined than ever to help miniatures in distress. We are currently fighting to rescue a mini in Almoradi that is tethered by the leg, unable to move and regularly beaten on the head with a stick. We have alerted the authorities and will push them to act – we owe it to Princess.

If you see any animal suffering, think of Princess. Complain to the authorities. Try to get something done. Details on animal welfare laws are on our website – www.easyhorsecare.net

Progress will be slow, but improvements in animal welfare will only happen if we show that cruelty is not acceptable.

Helping Princess's best friend

A more immediate legacy

In the final weeks, Princess and centre newcomer, Cookie, were inseparable. Princess's death has left Cookie mourning for her friend.

We can't bring Princess back, but we can at least give Cookie a last gift from Princess that could ultimately save her life.

By the time we heard about the amazing work being done in Barcelona by Gaspar it was too late for Princess. But, it should not be too late for Cookie, who also suffers

severe laminitis.

By taking Princess to Barcelona we learnt that there is more that can be done for horses damaged by laminitis than we'd ever dreamed possible.

If Gaspar can help Cookie, she need never get as bad as Princess. And, if Cookie benefits, Princess's last trip will not have been wasted. This will be Princess's immediate legacy and parting gift to her best friend.

