

Flurry's Story

In February of 2007, Dr. Emilie Storch was given a blind horse known as Freckles. She had been neglected and was infested with worms. This blind leopard appaloosa arrived muddy, meek and depressed. As she healed, her strong and confident personality emerged with her strong and beautiful body.

Freckles' name was changed to Flurry, to reflect that inner and outer beauty. Flurry loved to ride on trails and through pastures. She responded easily to both voice and leg commands and was a quick student. Sadly, Flurry died suddenly on Memorial Day of 2007. **Flurry's Hope** was developed to help other blind horses achieve their full potential, just as Flurry did.



Flurry, with her friend Alaina

*Blind horses **can** be ridden and serve useful lives! If you have a blind horse, or if your horse is losing his eyesight, don't think that this is the end. This could be the beginning of a very special relationship with your horse; one even better than before! Contact us for information regarding blind horses: training tips, safety steps, and encouragement!*

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FLURRY'S HOPE

Second Chances for Blind Horses

The mission of Flurry's Hope is to increase public awareness of the treasure in blind horses and their potential for riding. We offer help to others in learning how to care for and train their blind horses.



*Flurry...
a blind horse
who became
an inspiration!*

About Blind Horses

Veterinarian Beth Norton, DMV, says this about blind horses: "Blindness in a horse is a disability, not an *inability*. With patience, love, the right environment and appropriate training, most blind horses can function quite normally and make great equine companions that can be loved and enjoyed. In fact, many owners of blind horses

experience a closer emotional bond with their horses due to their increased dependency on their owner to be their eyes. This relationship can be incredibly

rewarding. The functional capability of a blind horse is much like a normal horse. They are only limited by their level of willingness, physical abilities and their owner's experience; much like a sighted horse. This spectrum ranges from being a companion pasture horse to a horse who can perform the highest level reining or dressage movements. There are many inspiring examples out there!"



Emilie with Promise



Belle (left, 20 years old) and Promise (right, 3 years old)

Training

The training of blind horses depends upon when they lost their sight. If a horse becomes blind later in life, he will need more reassurance and involvement from his caretaker. Blindness is new for him, and he can be timid about finding his way around. This is similar to a human attempting to learn a difficult skill later in life. Most blind horses seem very thankful that they are able to carry a rider again: this is what they love. Blind horses have an uncanny ability to develop a mental map of their surroundings. They will begin to walk around just as if they could see, avoiding the permanent objects in their paddock.

Horses that are blinded early in life often adapt as if they don't realize that they are blind. Their hearing, smell and sense of touch are developed from a young age; you may see them stretching their necks and turning their heads and ears to pick up sounds. Their ears tend to turn outward instead of forward, as they are attempting to gain more information through hearing. These horses usually adapt well to their surroundings and may trot and canter in their paddocks.

If blind horses are fearful, they may run in circles. This is especially true when they first arrive at a new location and don't know where they are. When training them, the most important thing is to let them know that you are there to help them. Specific voice greetings and commands are very important. Give them the ability to smell you regularly: this helps calm them. Consistent care-taking will help them to accept their new homes. As the horse begins to trust that you are consistently with him, you can proceed in small steps with training, just as you would with a sighted horse. The caretaker must be aware to alert the horse *in advance* that there are objects to step over,

holes, or other permanent fixtures. -The blind horse will become familiar with this new way of communication. To an observer, a blind horse can look just like a sighted horse if the one watching doesn't realize that you are giving the horse regular directions. The horse appears to spook less easily because he is not seeing things that might scare him. When he hears something that makes him afraid, he can spook in place with some excited steps but no movement.



Belle with her "pretty" mane

Public Awareness

Our blind horses have been rescued from a racehorse farm and a slaughter truck, and they have been given by individual donors. They have been blinded by equine uveitis, pasture accidents and other unknown sources. It doesn't matter what age or how a horse becomes blind, many can become productive with a second chance.

For many years, blind horses have been regarded as unusable. Most of these horses have been euthanized. While some horses are too anxious to be effective, many can quickly adjust and learn to compensate for their lack of vision. Blind horses almost always develop a deeper relationship with their riders because they are so dependent. Many are fully capable of being ridden both in the ring and out. As you begin to work with a blind horse, you often find that his great trust in you gives him a greater desire to learn and cooperate with you.

To increase public awareness, Dr. Emilie Storch publishes children's books that tell stories of blind horses and their accomplishments.