

In Fall 2015, a lady name Jane asked me to help get her horse Patches back into showing condition. Under Jane's ownership, Patches was boarded at a farm called Sunny Acres. Sunny Acres is a horse rescue that offers to the public: trail rides, riding lessons, pony rides, pony parties, barn tours, and boarding. They are open every day of the week for customers to, on their own, walk around and feed the horses treats. I personally had been riding at Sunny Acres for 5 years at the time I was asked to ride Patches. Jane and I knew each other from around the barn, and Jane had kindly offered to pay for my lessons on Patches with our trainer.

In late 2016, Jane passed away unexpectedly. Her family wanted nothing to do with her two horses (one being Patches), and decided they would sell them. The owner of Sunny Acres stepped in and told Jane's family that Jane wanted the horses to stay at their home where they were loved. Sunny Acres then took full responsibility and ownership of Patches and the other horse. I was allowed to continue riding Patches and I was his sole caregiver beside the feeding employees.

In the spring of 2017, almost four months after Jane had passed away, I was walking up from a lower pasture to the main barn area when I saw loads of my friends and family hanging around, and Patches was being lead up to me with a "Congrats on your first horse" sign tied around his neck. I, of course, was the happiest girl on the planet that day. Later that day I came to find out that in the "Adoption Contract" which transferred ownership of Patches from Sunny Acres to my mom, there was a section titled "Boarding Clause." There was written:

"Patches is not allowed to leave premises of Sunny Acres Rescue for boarding or stabling purposes at anytime in the future. He must remain stabled at Sunny Acres for the rest of his life as per previous owners wishes. He can go off property for shows and/or trail riding only. Failure to adhere to this will result in termination of this agreement and ownership will revert back to Sunny Acres immediately."

(Might I mention that so far as I believe, there is no formal proof of will from Jane that states the fate of her horses should she suddenly pass away. While, at the time, we would have all agreed that Jane would have rather her horses stay at a familiar barn with familiar people instead of being sold to strangers, there was no actual formal proof of this to quote in Patches adoption contract. If I were to ask Sunny acres' barn owner it would surely notify them that I do not want to board Patches there anymore.)

Since that day on, my family and I have had full responsibility over all of Patches expensive: boarding, farrier, dentistry, vet, etc. We maintain all executive decisions over Patches except for boarding location.

For a while before Patches had even become mine, I had aversive feelings about Sunny Acres. It wasn't until my trainer left Sunny Acres and took me to many different local barns that I

realised what I had been missing out on. Each barn showed better education about caring for horses and managing a barn. The horses were healthier, the people were friendlier, the atmosphere was overall *better*. And these barns were not open to the public like Sunny Acres is, so I knew that the horses were only being interacted with by educated horse people. The arenas at these places were never congested (and if they were, people knew basic arena etiquette) and there were never little kids running around screaming.

After my trainer left Sunny Acres, soon all of my close friends left as well, then one by one boarders moved to other farms where they could continue to be under our trainer's eye. Naturally, I started daydreaming about relocating Patches to one of these more professional barns that I knew I would undoubtedly be happier at, and where patches and I could continue our training. I met many people from the different barns I lessoned at who all knew my story, that my horse was stuck at Sunny Acres against my will. They all said how it was very unfair. That Sunny Acres just wanted a horse off their payroll and took advantage of my love for him. That they were nasty people to force this horse to stay at their barn when I was the one who actually *owned* him. Hearing what everyone else had to say about Patches and I, and seeing how much they all cared and felt so passionately about our story, solidified the fact that I'd gotten into a really sticky situation.

In early 2018, my trainer introduced me to a lady named Sally who had an OTTB who needed to be worked with and sold. It was then that Sally and I started a little partnership; I would school and exercise a couple of her horses and help out around her barn. A couple months in, Sally told that she would love to have Patches at her barn. She even offered to match the boarding fee that I am paying right now, even though she has every right to demand higher. Sally has a what's-not-to-love private barn. Hurricane proof center-aisle barn on 19 acres of grass pasture. Sally keeps her horses on 24 hour turnout except for feeding time and rainstorms.

Sally has a beautiful 19 acre facility which includes a lighted clay arena, two hack fields with jumps, a small pond, and there is lake access and 70+ acres of cow pasture trails behind the property. On top of that, Sally is very knowledgeable about equine nutrition and has been caring for horses for decades. Patches would be on a very good diet plan, and have amazing turnout, and we could resume lessons with my trainer and begin showing again.

I know with all my heart Patches and I would be so so happy there. The atmosphere is so happy and calm and not chaotic or competitive. I enjoying going to Sally's barn and riding so much more than i enjoy seeing my own horse at Sunny Acres. Don't get me wrong, I love patches with all my heart, but I dread going out to Sunny Acres to see him. With himg being at a barn that I love and am excited to be at, I know our relationship could only get better.

At Sunny acres, Patches is stalled during the day with one flake of coastal grass hay. His stall is a 9x9 made of wood panels, with it being fairly exposed to the weather. During our summer showers I would often find him drenched in rain water just from standing in his stall. At night he is turn out in a half acre sand dry lot with 4 other horses and has access to a coastal hay roll for

about 15 hours. Not the worst turn out, but he does not get along with his pasture mates as they have to fight over their one source of forage and there is often a hierarchy imbalance due to herd rotations when a new rescue is placed in or taken from his field.

In comparison, at Sally's barn Patches would be turned out onto a 10 acre grass pasture with Sally's four other horses. Patches would not be obligated to stand next to a bully horse to grab some bites of hay like his situation right now at Sunny acres. If he so chooses, he could stand on the opposite end of the field from the others and still meet his daily forage requirements. (I make a big deal of turn out situation because this is how my horse is spending the majority of his life, and he should be nothing but happy).

At Sunny Acres, I have noticed many little happenings that feed into a big mess of improper caring rituals of my own horse. To name a few, Patches grain and pasture were changed without my knowledge or consent, and I am a very hands on owner who expects to be notified of anything like this happening. Neither happened gradually either, which worried me about risks of colic due to high stress and sudden nutrient change. When putting Patches on a supplement, the barn owner and manager both felt the need to educate me on how feeding that supplement wasn't good for Patches and that his grain already had that ingredient in it. With Sunny Acres being a rescue, there is often sickly horses being brought on property and the owners have no concept of a quarantine, and I once saw with my own two eyes them remove a new rescue from the trailer then "introduce" him to the barn horses, letting them all nuzzle the new horse who may never been vaccinated in its entire life.

Another thing that I am not pleased with is that Patches is often exposed to heavy rains and lightning storms. Patches very susceptible to rain rot, and in my area its not uncommon for a cow or horse to be struck by lightning. A simple practice to counter either of these would be to turn the horses in, but that would be very difficult for Sunny Acres as they have over 50 horses. However, at Sally's place, I know she is very serious about this practice. In the summertime where our temperatures can easily get over 100 degrees, I frequently found the fans turned off in Patches' stall. In the morning when he is being brought in from his field, he is not hand lead but let to run in, having to pass the parking lot and dodge farm equipment, often stopping on his way in to steal the other horse's grain. (As you can imagine this also creates major ground manner issues).

As I mentioned before, Patches is currently on ½ acre dry lot with a coast hay roll. There are many times that I glimpse into his field and see that their hay roll is gone, and it may not be until a couple days that is it resupplied. Last summer, his pasture once went two weeks without a forage source, except for two coastal flake per horse for the entire 24 hour time period of those two weeks. In the summertime, when my area has very intense rainstorms, the footing around Patches' hay roll gets to be about 8 inches deep of feces, urine, and mud, that they must stand in for hours on end, not moving around as horses are designed to, getting stocked up, ripping and tearing at the hay twine to grab a bite of hay. It's been expressed many times by boarders

to not put their horses hay in the same area twice, as it's a breeding ground for thrush and other bacterias, but Sunny Acres didn't seem to care.

I could go on for ages about how unhappy I am with Patches level of care. Having been riding and helping out at Sally's barn for almost a year I realise how good Patches could be living now and how poorly educated his living conditions are right now. I feel that as his "mom," I am responsible for giving him a voice and for fighting for him to make sure he is getting the best care available in our area. Right now he is not receiving it at Sunny Acres, and any horse owner would not think twice about moving their horse to a barn where they know they will get better care. I feel I have been robbed of the right to improve my horse's life.

To reiterate, the reason I cannot move Patches to another barn is because in the adoption contract that my mom signed (the document transferring ownership of Patches), there is a boarding clause that states if Patches were to be boarded at another barn, the ownership contract would be terminated, because Patches previous owner who passed away would not have wanted Patches to leave Sunny Acres. In my heart, my gut, I know that Jane, Patches previous owner, would be so happy known that Patches was under my care and that I was now his mom. I know Jane would have agreed with me that Patches would benefit extremely from living at such a nice barn as Sally's, where he would be getting optimum care, where him and I would be able to ride and show with our trainer (who was one of her best friends) again.

In September 2018, I explained to my mom how I was feeling and she agreed that there was no point in either of us paying board at a place where we were not happy. We set up a meeting with the Sunny Acres barn owner and the barn manager. In this meeting my mother and I expressed that we are not happy with Patches care and that we thought it was in his best interest to move him to a place where we could continue training for my last show season before college, as well as a place where he could get the best care imaginable. I was surprised when the owner said she did not agree with our decision and would not allow it. Surely after 8 years of being practically raised by this wonderful women she would only want what's best for me and my horse? Her reason why was that she promised Jane she would look after Jane's horses and that if Patches left the property then she would be breaking her promise. So I countered with: How do we know that Jane would not be happy knowing Patches was under my care and being spoiled rotten on what is such a beautiful farm where he could live such a natural and healthy lifestyle?

And Sunny Acres' owner's response was "I don't know." This response made me almost certain that she somewhat agreed that this move was best for Patches. This response made me almost certain, too, that Jane never wished for Patches to stay with Sunny Acres for the rest of his life like the adoption contract states.

That was the last time I mentioned moving to my mom or Sunny Acres, but I still want it more than anything. I am ready to start fighting for Patches again.