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## Exodus From the Nebraska Killing Fields



**By Jerry Finch, Founder**

### **Habitat for Horses**

The arena was a wild and crazy place today, just as expected. Three semi trucks with straight load trailers arrived around 9 and three hours later, pulled away with over 100 horses. The mares were pulled from the back and took over the pens once occupied by the studs, more trailers were loaded, Doc filled out health certificates all day - everything seemed a little insane not only to the horses, but to we humans also.

Jim and I, being savvy horse people, stood as far away as we could and watched. Occasionally, I opened a gate or two, even more often jumping in a pen to ask a horse to turn around and go the other way. There simply is no way to comfortably load 100+ wild horses in three hours if you include microchip scanning, squeeze chutes and some gray headed old cowboy more concerned with not spilling his coffee than opening a gate.

The Cheyenne truck decided to come in late, so he's spending the night somewhere in town, or out on the highway in his truck, and will be out in the morning. We have a couple of trailers loading first, then comes the Cheyenne truck, taking a bunch of mares and babies. When he pulls out, I'll be right behind him (sorry, Avis, for the condition of the car. Things like that happen when you follow too closely to a truck full of horses).

I'll arrive with something like 28 big horses and 6 babies. Most of those are already spoken for and will leave on Monday. According to Hilary at Front Range Equine Rescue, who is handling adoptions, we already have a bunch of calls from people wanting horses.

I just signed over the studs (soon to be gelded) and geldings to HSUS's Black Beauty Ranch, where they will live under the watchful eye of people that are pretty dang particular about who they might consider for adoption.

So the bottom line is this - we started out this project with around 211 horses. Provided the adoptions as scheduled go through, on Monday we will end up in Cheyenne with 13 left, and I fully expect them to be gone by mid week. Front Range handled all the adoptions, with Stacy at HSUS reaching out to organizations across the country.

We're not finished yet, and I'm not leaving until the last horse is adopted, so perhaps it's a wee bit premature to scream, but I'm on the verge of saying that we - all of us together - completed an impossible mission. Let's wait a few more days before we send up the fireworks, but be prepared.

I have someone driving all the way from south of Houston to the Black Beauty Ranch up by Dallas on Sunday to pick up our Texas bound horses, who are on the road tonight. Sometime Sunday evening, probably late, Voodoo and Itchy will be at the HfH ranch. Interesting that they get there before I can return home, but they need a well deserved rest - like for the rest of their lives - and when I arrive I'll finally be able to spend more than a few distracted minutes with them.

I really want to talk with Voodoo. I think that old man has a lot to tell me, even more to teach me, and is waiting to let me know what his world is like. He drew me in when he looked up at the plane as I was flying over. The other few living horses out on the hills ran, but Voodoo just stood there, frozen in place, standing on the top of the highest hill, almost like a beacon, almost like he was waiting. That look is one I will never forget, just as I'll never forget the endless vision of dead horses and bleached white bones.

Let me get the rest of the mares into a safe place, then I'll be home. Only then will I be able to walk out into that pasture and thank Voodoo for drawing me in. If he's anything like my son Pete, he'll swing his butt around to me and say, "No problem, Pops. Say, would you scratch back there for me? You have a cookie?"

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