FROM TEARS TO TRIUMPH

Duchess Sanctuary staff watched in horror as two weak and obviously neglected horses gingerly emerged from the transport trailer. The gelding, called Captain, was so emaciated that most of his skeleton was clearly visible. Anna, the mare, had a fungal skin infection, an unattended knee injury and long, cracked hooves.

Seized by authorities in Nevada after being abandoned and left to starve by their owner, the horses were rescued and given a second chance. With the help of the American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign, Equine Welfare Consulting Services and generous donors and advocates, the pair traveled to Duchess.

“With tears streaming down their faces, the horses made their way into the care center,” says Jennifer Kunz, director of operations at Duchess. “It was obvious that they had been saved from terrible circumstances. With a body condition score of barely two [on a scale of nine], Captain had us holding back tears.”

Step one for staff members was to place the horses in quarantine, let them settle in and assess their needs. They set up a careful re-feeding program. They bathed and groomed them. They had their feet trimmed and medical issues addressed.

“It took about three months to get Captain healthy enough that we were comfortable with sedating him for the dental work he needed,” Kunz says.

Fast-forward to today: Captain and Anna are healthy and contented horses—as long as they are in sight of each other. The suffering they endured together created a strong bond, and they become very upset if separated.

To reduce stress and prevent illness, the bonded pair has not been introduced to other horses. They spend their days in their own paddock, receiving lots of cookies—and lots of love—from their caretakers.

“‘To watch them step off the trailer was very emotional,’ says Jennifer Kunz, director of operations at Duchess. ‘It was obvious that they had been saved from terrible circumstances. With a body condition score of barely two [on a scale of nine], Captain had us holding back tears.’

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*Operated by HSUS affiliate The Fund for Animals

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