



**ARL**  
ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF IOWA, INC.

*Protect Your Horse*

## **Protect Your Horse from Being Lost or Stolen**

*From the Animal Rescue League of Iowa and the Humane Society of the United States*

Horse theft is not just a legend of the Wild West. Every day, horses are reported missing or stolen—an estimated 40,000 annually in the United States. Horses can also disappear following natural disasters such as hurricanes, fires, and floods. Once lost, horses are very difficult to recover; many are quickly sold at auctions to slaughterhouses. To keep your horse safe, follow these tips.

- Keep proof-of-ownership documents in a secure place. Photos, registration papers, and health records will help identify your horse and prove ownership in the event your horse is missing. The photographs should be clear and current and show your horse from all four sides to highlight his identifying marks.
- Have your horse permanently identified. You can have your horse permanently identified by microchip or freeze brand. If you have your horse microchipped, be sure to register the microchip with a national registry.
- Don't leave a halter on your horse. Halters make it easier for thieves to catch horses. This is a safety issue, too: A halter might get caught on something and cause your horse to be trapped. Also, do not leave halters hanging near gates where thieves might enter.
- Lock gates and barn doors. Locked gates and barn doors often will deter a thief, but be certain that they do not create a fire hazard.
- Erect sturdy fencing around your property. Wire fencing is easily cut by thieves.
- Restrict access to your property. To prevent easy access to your horse by unauthorized vehicles, block farm lanes and driveways that are in remote areas or far away from your residence.
- When possible, move your horse to an area where she can be seen from your residence or the roadway. This is particularly important at night, when theft is most likely to occur.



- Install motion-activated lights to illuminate the areas where you keep your horse at night. Mount the lights on barn buildings or fences so they will turn on if anyone approaches the barn or field.
- Consider purchasing monitors or alarms. Video monitors and alarm systems can be wired to your residence.
- Inform your local animal control agency and police department of any suspicious activities. Be sure to write down a description of the people and vehicles involved, including the vehicle license plate number. Encourage your neighbors to watch for suspicious activity, too.
- Immediately report a horse theft or disappearance to the appropriate law enforcement agency in your area. Also, provide a written description and photographs of your horse to livestock auctions in your area and in surrounding states.
- Post flyers offering a reward for information leading to the safe return of your horse.
- Contact local media with your story.
- Finally, consider visiting horse slaughterhouses in your state and in neighboring states; there have been several cases of horses being recovered at these facilities when owners have acted quickly.