

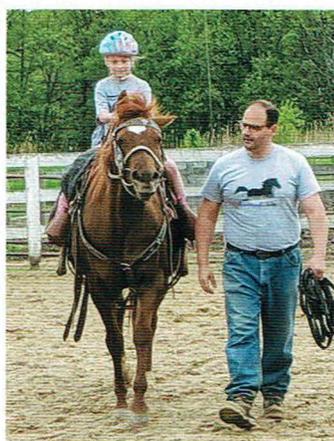
Cherry on Top

By Janet
Mazzarini,
owner of
The Mustang
Acres Farm



Though sick and starving, Cherry refused to give up.

The photos of the sorrel mare showed a horse with warm eyes and an elegant carriage. She was a beautiful horse with an uncertain future, and we at The Mustang Acres



When Cherry arrived at The Mustang Acres Farm, she was sick and severely underweight. Today she has not only recovered but has blossomed. Cherry is now helping a Girl Scout troop earn their horseback riding badges.



The Mustang Acres FARM
A 501(c)3 Nonprofit Organization

The Mustang Acres Farm puts a special emphasis on saving as many mustangs as they can from abandonment and neglect. The Michigan-based rescue keeps nearly all their horses to ensure they have a happy, healthy, easy life for the rest of their lives. Learn more at www.tma.farm.



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her, developing a bond. After three weeks of both uncertainty and hope, we had a breakthrough! Cherry became more attentive and energetic. She was eating more. Her cough was subsiding. After a month, her muscles and personality started to emerge. She wanted to explore beyond her quarantine area, and her health had finally started to improve.

Fifty days after arrival, we decided it was a good time to bring her into the arena to determine what, if any, training she had. Was she going to be gentle or was

she going to be aggressive? Did she have any training buttons or was she a blank slate? Could she still be the right horse for our daughter? We went through the basics: joining up, leading, going through water, walking through obstacles and more. Cherry was just as calm and gentle as we had hoped and was eager to show off all that she knew. Throughout the process, our daughter stayed right by Cherry's side, always talking to her and petting her.

Our confidence in Cherry grew, and soon we felt comfortable having our

daughter ride her. Although she was only 4, she had already been riding for two years and was eager to saddle up her own horse. The second our daughter was on Cherry's back, their partnership was obvious. Cherry responded to every command, and we were left speechless when our daughter asked for a faster gait and Cherry obliged with a gentle canter—our daughter's first! What an experience! With our daughter on her back, Cherry blossomed into a new horse. She started looking like that beautiful, elegant horse we had first seen in the photographs.

Our daughter's bond with Cherry has only grown since that ride, and these days, Cherry is truly her horse. However, she shares Cherry with her Girl Scout troop, and the mare is helping them earn horseback riding badges.

Cherry showed us the power of integrity, grit and passion. She reminds us every day that the work we do at The Mustang Acres Farm requires courage and perseverance, that our sleepless nights and often fragile hopes are worth it. Our hearts are full watching Cherry, and all our horses, thrive and become the amazing animals they were destined to be.

Farm were committed to ensuring she wouldn't fall into the wrong hands. In May 2017 I rescued Cherry, thinking she would be the perfect horse for our 4-year-old daughter.

But the horse advertised online was nothing like the horse in front of us. This was an animal who required extensive care. The day after arriving at our barn, she started showing signs of strangles and developed a heavy, rattling cough. Our veterinarian prescribed multiple antibiotics.

In addition to being sick, Cherry was severely underweight. At just 650 pounds, she was hardly more than skin and bones. We established a re-feeding program with a diet full of protein, lysine, vitamins, minerals and amino acids.

At first, we saw no improvement in her health or weight and questioned whether her broken body was going to be up to the challenge. She was lethargic and not showing much interest in anything. She would eat only sparingly, not taking in anywhere near the amount she needed. We were concerned she might not make it.

We stayed the course, talking to her, keeping her company and showing her love. Our daughter spent many hours with