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Chichester farm takes in four rescued horses from Deering

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The last of four horses – newly named Solstice – was ushered out of the back of its trailer, its gray, matted hair covered in filth.

The horses moved slowly toward their new pens at the Live and Let Live Farm in Chichester. They hadn't been outside in years, rescuers said.

Another horse, renamed Supernova, was mostly skin and bones and had a visible tumor on her stomach in addition to her muscle atrophy.

In their new environment, volunteers got a chance to closely examine the horses.

"This winter fur should have been gone a long time ago, but their bodies didn't have the ability to shed it," said Teresa Paradis, director and founder of the farm that takes in abandoned and neglected animals. "Their feet are clubbed and spread out; they're not just long, but they're also bigger than they should be."

Paradis received a call from Deering police to help with an animal rescue at 558 East Deering Road, a 70-acre farm owned by Anthony Costine. Police executed a search warrant after the department received numerous complaints about the state of the horses living on the property.

Deering police Chief James Pushee said the conditions in the farm were, "more than deplorable," with manure up to the ankles in the horses' pens.

Rebecca Howland, a documentary filmmaker who is profiling the farm, was on her first rescue mission Thursday.

"It was obvious they didn't take care of the barn or the horses in it," she said. "There were discarded pieces of wood. ... It was gross and it was sad."

The four horses were given a new name – each after a cosmic event because of the summer solstice on Wednesday – to commemorate their new start. Joining Solstice and Supernova were Eclipse and Equinox.

Paradis said the horses faced a long, difficult and expensive road to recovery.

“Probably minimum three or four months, but probably more like a year,” she said of the horses’ likely recovery time. “We have to be able to evaluate every part of them, from the mouth to figuring out their age to figuring out what their feet are like and getting X-rays.”

The four horses are just a small fraction of the 70 or so horses the farm has on site and has cared for since it opened 20 years ago with its mission to save animals – particularly horses and dogs – who had been abandoned.

“We are a volunteer-based rescue with over 500 volunteers that put in over 50,000 hours last year,” Paradis said. “We have birds, we have turtles, we have cattle – we have everything.”

Allowing all these horses to have a place for recovery is a massive undertaking, Paradis said, but it’s one she fought tooth and nail to take on.

“Medical care runs \$50,000-\$60,000 a year,” she said. “We survive on donations. ... It’s thousands and thousands of dollars, and by the looks of those horses, it’ll be a long time.”

Howland, the documentarian, said the farm was a huge success in helping animals like the horses rescued Thursday, and its work drove her desire to help it continue.

“The atmosphere here and what they do, I thought was worthy of a documentary,” she said. “There’s other animal farms but its (Paradis’s) whole philosophy ... it’s all about what’s natural for the horse.”

For more information about Live and Let Live Farm or to make a donation visit liveandletlivefarm.org.