



**PHOTO AVAILABLE: Horse Protection Group, Habitat for Horses, Inc., Calls For Help After Panhandle Fires**

*Wildfires ravaged one million acres of the Texas Panhandle two weeks ago, killing 10,000 cows and horses, and leaving hundreds more in need of urgent help.*

For Immediate Release

HITCHCOCK, Texas/EWORLDWIRE/March 27, 2006 --- Wildfires ravaged one million acres of the Texas Panhandle two weeks ago, killing 10,000 cows and horses, and leaving hundreds more in need of urgent help.

Jerry Finch, president of Habitat for Horses based in the Houston area, says that over 100 horses are badly injured and need immediate care, while many others are less severely hurt.

“So far, we know of over 100 horses that must have attention now,” Finch says. “There are a lot of surviving horses that have been badly burned. Also several newborn foals can’t nurse because of their mothers’ burns. It’s just too painful for these mares to allow their foals to suckle.”

Habitat for Horses, an equine protection group organized in 1998 as a non-profit 501(c)(3), began assessing needs in the Panhandle last week. The group was recognized last year by Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine for its efforts following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Horse owners, while doing their best to care for their own, have an overwhelmingly difficult task. Many in the region lost their homes, barns and livestock.

“Barns, tack rooms and necessary feed and supplies have all been incinerated,” explains Finch.

Among those counties requesting assistance are Gray, Wheeler, Roberts, Hutchison, Hemphill and Carson.

Says 17-year old Tara Thomas in Gray County, “It’d be good if some folks who can would just pitch in. It’s not just hay and feed. We need so much. Buckets to put the feed in, halters, lead ropes and medical supplies.” Gray and her family lost their home, barn, fences, cattle, several vehicles and two horses in the fire. Six horses that survived were severely burned.

“It takes all day to just feed and doctor animals,” says Susie Thomas, Tara’s mother. “And I mean long days the time we finish, it’s dark again.”

Rebecca Simmons, a fifth generation resident of the area was luckier than the Thomas family, but she is worried. “The fields are blowing a fine black soot,” says Simmons who has a degree in equine science. “The vets will tell you that what we are facing next is animals dying of respiratory problems and weakened immune systems.”

Recent winter-like weather in the Panhandle has created a need for horse blankets. Ranch horses that are not normally blanketed now lack the shelter of trees or barns. Smoke inhalation coupled with cold and winds have put horses at further risk.

Donations of urgently needed supplies are being coordinated through the Habitat for Horses/Lone Star Equine Rescue members network and Dr. Leanne Hillhouse, a Panhandle veterinarian.

Tax-deductible cash donations may be sent directly to Habitat for Horses at [www.habitatforhorses.org](http://www.habitatforhorses.org) and [www.lser.org](http://www.lser.org) or mailed to Habitat for Horses/LSER, P.O. Box 213, Hitchcock, Texas 77563. Further inquiries may be made at 866-434-5737.

“There’s not a lot of time for some of these horses,” says Finch. “If people want to help, they really have to do it now.”

#### **About Habitat for Horses, Inc.**

Habitat for Horses/Lone Star Equine Rescue is a 501.c.3 nonprofit covering Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma with around 1,000 dedicated members. It provides equine rescue services to law enforcement agencies throughout the state of Texas, an active equine adoption program, an equine education center and equine-assisted services to youths and adults. For more information, contact HfH/LSER at 866-434-5737.

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**KEYWORDS:** Texas, fires, horse, cattle, emergency, rescue, burn, non-profit

**SOURCE:** Habitat for Horses, Inc.

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Photo: Burned Horse (size: 0.1 k)

Photo- Burned Horse

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