



MARYLAND EQUINE TRANSITION SERVICE

A PROGRAM OF THE MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL FOUNDATION



Annual Report 2020



Maryland Equine Transition Service



It is amazing how far the METS program has come in the last three years! Since our start in 2018, METS has evolved to fit the needs of the Maryland equine community, helping Maryland horse owners make safe, responsible decisions for their horses in need of transition. Some horses, for whatever reason, have limited marketability. The creation of METS three years ago filled a gap for these horses in need of transition, and has alleviated some of the pressure off rescues and sanctuaries. Without METS, the fate of many horses could be unclear.

Coming off an extremely successful 2019, we all had exceedingly high hopes for METS in 2020. However, 2020 and the coronavirus pandemic had other things in mind. Once the lockdowns started, we had to re-engineer the way we did

assessments and began doing virtual assessments. By mid-summer as things started to open back up, we were able to perform modified in-person assessments again, until the second surge in COVID cases caused us to return to the virtual assessment model in December 2020. Despite the challenges, METS pushed on to complete over 60 transitions, assess over 50 horses, and surpass our fundraising efforts from previous years.

As we move into 2021, the METS program has moved to a new home. When METS received its grant from the Arnall Family Foundation/Right Horse Initiative in 2018, the Maryland Horse Council did not have an established charitable organization to manage the grant and receive tax-deductible donations to fund the program. We were fortunate that the great folks at Days End Farm Horse Rescue stepped forward and agreed to administer the grant and manage other donations for us. Over the past two years, MHC has developed a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit called the Maryland Horse Council Foundation, which will take over the management of METS and other charitable endeavors of the Maryland Horse Council. Moving forward, one of our goals is to build out the Board of Directors for the Foundation with likeminded individuals with the inclination and means to help us build the MHC Foundation and METS into sustainable organizations that can support our Maryland horses for years to come.

With our generous three-year grant from the Arnall Family Foundation/Right Horse Initiative about to end, our major focus has turned to fundraising and overall sustainability of the program. With the development of MHCF and our shift toward fundraising and sustainability, Jessica Avila-Franco was brought on board as the new Development Officer for METS and MHC Foundation. Jessica's goals are to develop programs that will communicate the METS message and need to our entire horse community in Maryland, including but not limited to private industry, aftercare programs, the rescue community, and educational efforts, so that we can build out the network of potential new owners and build out a donor base that can help us support the program.

Every transition is a testament to the collaboration available with the Maryland equine community, but one case in particular showcases this, along with the power and potential of a mobile service like METS, exceedingly well. Our largest single case to date, the 23 Eastern Shore Thoroughbreds (see their story on page 10), was a triumph in collaboration of the equine community. It took patience, transparency, and assistance from industry partners, Maryland rescues, and private owners to find safe, appropriate homes for each of these horses. As our program continues to grow and change, we strive to keep that spirit of collaboration strong in every transition we facilitate.

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Neil'.

Neil Agate
Maryland Horse Council President



About METS

The Maryland Equine Transition Service (METS) is a statewide equine safety net initiative of the Maryland Horse Council Foundation (MHCF) that provides safe alternatives for horses needing homes by helping owners identify and select the best transition options for their horses.

METS is a mobile service that provides individualized services for horses in need of transition, including equine assessment, marketing assistance, end-of-life support, and facilitation of horses to new homes.

Assessments Specialist Katy Whipple travels on-site to visit horses in need of transition and gives a comprehensive behavioral, health, and soundness assessment. From there, the horse can be placed on the METS website and all inquiries are evaluated by METS staff before the Inquirer's information is passed along to the owner.

In certain situations, humane euthanasia may be the best and most reasonable option. METS staff are prepared to assist owners with making and carrying out the decision to euthanize their horse. This is often an extremely difficult and emotional decision for owners, and METS is always prepared to offer emotional support to help the owner find peace of mind.

Our Statistics:

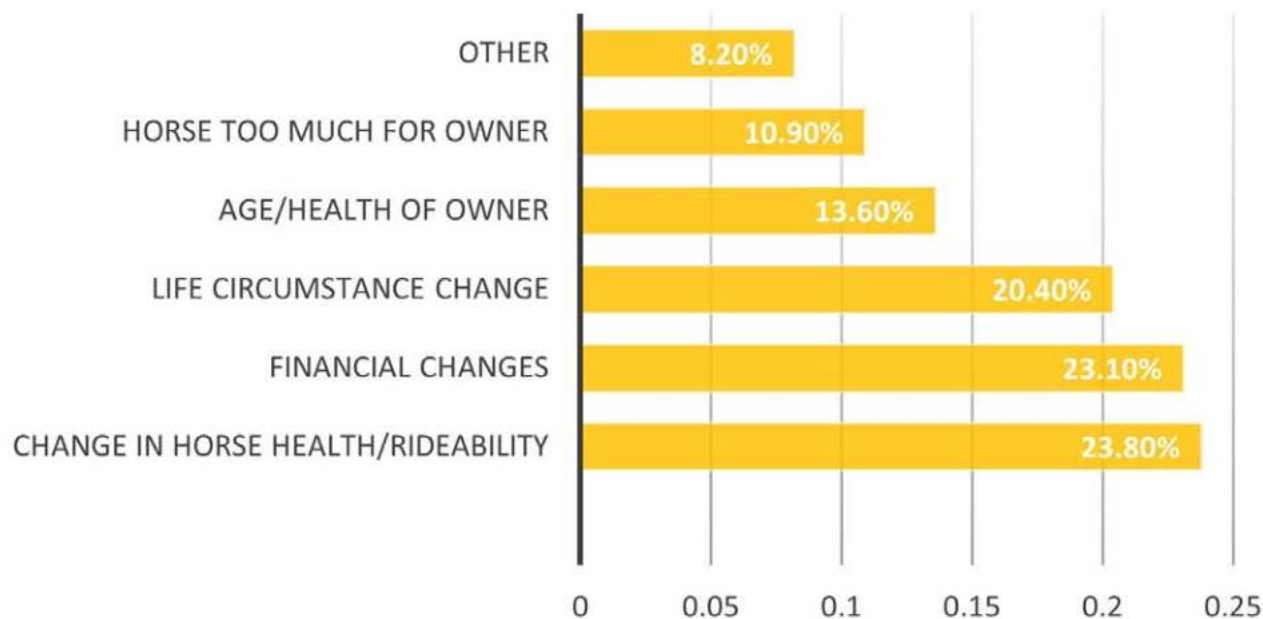
While we did find that our numbers were down from last year, we believe this was caused by the pandemic, and not for lack of individuals needing assistance. METS was able to complete **45 assessments** for **53 horses** in 2020. Of the 53 horses, 10 of those were assessed completely virtually. **Out of those 10 virtually assessed horses, METS has directly helped with the transition of seven.** Over all, METS helped with the transition of over 60 horses this year. Seven of those transitions were humane euthanasia funded by METS.

The reasons why an owner might contact for assistance are always complex, but we found that **changes in horse health and rideability** were the top reason in 2020. **Financial changes** came in at a close second. No matter the reason an owner is looking to transition their horse, we want to provide compassionate and nonjudgmental assistance.



Sherman was the first METS horse to be assessed through our fully virtual model.

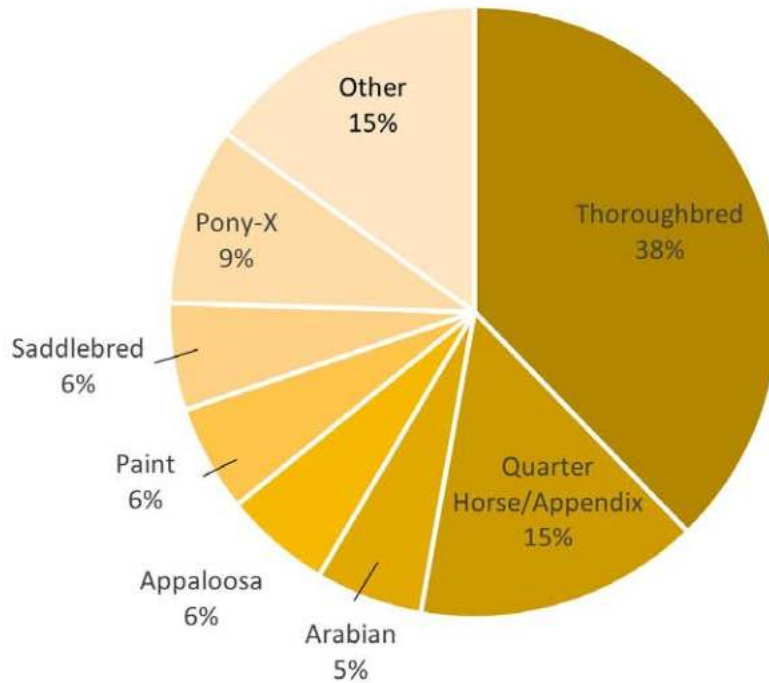
Reasons For Assistance Requests



Our Statistics:



Breeds Assessed in 2020



The most common breed assessed in 2020 was the **Thoroughbred**, coming in at 38%. In fact, since the full roll out of transition assistance in 2018, METS has assessed **80** Thoroughbreds! Some of the breeds in the "other" section for 2020 include an Azteca horse, a Tennessee Walking Horse, a Chincoteague pony, and a Tiger horse.

The breakdown of mares vs. geldings assessed this year was almost dead even, with geldings coming in just one higher.

Mares Assessed: 26

VS

Geldings Assessed: 27

What's in store for 2021?

METS' COVID-19 Response

In the beginning of March, Maryland Horse Council, The Equiery, and METS staff all left our Lisbon office and shifted to working remotely. At this time, we were unaware of the massive changes that would unfold in the next nine months. As shut downs and shelter-in-place orders began, we saw that there was going to be an uptick in assistance requests for those affected by COVID-19. In April, The Maryland Fund For Horses (MFFH) and METS banded together to assist horse owners throughout the state affected by the COVID-19 economic crisis. The MFFH and METS collaboration was to provide an expanded safety net geared toward keeping as many horses as possible out of danger during this challenging time. Horses are now at higher risk of ending up at auction, sent to slaughter, or being neglected.



*Doing the right thing
for Maryland's equines*

While MFFH is a program geared toward enabling owners to keep their horses, METS aims to assist owners who can no longer keep them. MFFH is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that provides financial aid rebates and vouchers for health care and hay. With this collaboration, we were able to provide assistance and direction to even more individuals.

Let us help you keep your horses safe.

**Feed, hay & health
care assistance:**

www.mdfundforhorses.org

410-775-1562

info@mdfundforhorses.org



**For rehoming & euthanasia
assistance:**

www.mdequinetransition.org

410-970-6474

info@mdequinetransition.org



METS' COVID-19 Response



Program Coordinator Emily helping out during an assessment in September.

As cases continued to rise in Maryland and travel was restricted to essential workers, METS shifted to a virtual assessment model and **we were able to stay in service even through shelter-in-place.** Switching to this virtual model took some trial and error, but it was essential to find a way to provide services without endangering any humans involved.

METS was able to function remotely with all our team members continuing their valuable work from assessment all the way through placement for the horse in a new forever home. From April to June, we operated through a virtual assessment model. In late June, we were able to return to modified in-person assessments where we required masks and social distancing. **As cases rose again in December, METS decided to return to a virtual model until further notice.**

With the virtual model, we put more trust into the information the owners give us in their paperwork. METS has always been as upfront, open, and honest about the horses in our program as possible, and we did not want the virtual model to compromise that honesty. Assessments Specialist Katy has increased the communication with each owner in order to help them with pictures and videos that METS staff would usually be responsible for. We have included a disclaimer on all virtually assessed horses that METS hasn't seen the horse in person, but that we've confirmed the information given to the best of our ability.



Assessments Specialist Katy handling a horse during an assessment.

Fundraising Efforts



Our supporters rallied together to make Giving Tuesday 2020 our most successful yet. We were able to raise almost **\$4,500** of our **\$5,000** goal. A BIG thank you to the Maryland Horse Breeders Association for their very generous match gift!

While rising numbers of COVID-19 put a damper on our Dine For Equines campaign, we were able to collaborate with **Bistro 91** in Finksburg for a fundraiser in December. We're hoping to try this campaign again when it's safer to do so!



Support the Maryland Equine Transition Service.

When you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon donates.

[Go to smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)

[amazon smile](https://smile.amazon.com)

With the Maryland Horse Council Foundation (MHCF) becoming a confirmed 501(c)(3), we were able to register for **Amazon Smile**. This, in combination with Facebook fundraising, will be a crucial step as we move forward into self-sufficiency.

METS was able to collaborate with **Furnace Hills Coffee Roasters** in Westminster, MD. We have four different blends to choose from, all with unique names we were able to pick ourselves! **As of December, we've sold almost 100 pounds of coffee!**



Success Stories: 23 Thoroughbreds



In December 2018, METS staff got a call from an owner who was looking to rehome 23 of her Thoroughbreds. The owner had retired from breeding and had already rehomed about half of her herd, but she reached out for help for these final 23. It was a mixed bag of mares and geldings, trained and untrained, young and old. Some of the horses had raced at one point or another; some had been broodmares; two were even unnamed at the time of assessment! Out of the 23 total, METS directly helped with the transition of 19 of those Thoroughbreds. The last of the group, Hot Cocoa, was placed in October 2020, almost two years after METS first started assisting this group of incredible equines!

A number of METS Partners helped find great homes for this group, and we are so thankful to them and all the private homes that stepped up and found space in their barns and hearts!

Success Stories



Oakley

Oakley was assessed by METS in November 2020. His owner had purchased him earlier in the year, under the impression he was a 7yo Appendix. After discussion with her vet and a DNA test, she found out Oakley was closer to 4 years and was a TB/Hanoverian/Trakehner cross! He was spooky and began showing bad behavior under saddle, despite his owner's efforts to figure out the underlying issue. She realized that Oakley was a bit much for her, and financial struggles were making it difficult to get him the correct training he needed, so she reached out to METS for help. Oakley is not a bad horse, but he was given a disservice by being marketed with more training than he actually had.

The poor behavior under saddle was not due to pain or ulcers; he had just never been taught any different. In an alternative situation, he could have easily ended up in the wrong hands or injured someone by accident. With METS' help, Oakley was quickly rehomed and has started his training sessions to become a solid citizen. His new owner, Kirsten, has already seen a difference in his demeanor as he slows his mind and learns to focus on his handler. Happy trails, Oakley!

La Malandrina (Mal)

Mal is a 2008 Thoroughbred mare that was originally assessed by METS in November 2019. Her owner was going off to college and Mal had some lameness issues under saddle with no known cause of injury. After METS listed her, her owner decided to pull the ad until after the vet had been out to diagnose the lameness. After being relisted in April 2020, Mal very quickly found her new person, Catie! We strive to get as much info as possible about a horse during an assessment. This helps us create an accurate and honest listing for the horse so we can find the best possible placement. With the cooperation with Mal's previous owners, we were able to market her correctly so she could have a successful transition. We think all those ribbons show that Mal and Catie are a pretty good match!





Poco



Shady Lady and
Greywolf



Ziggy



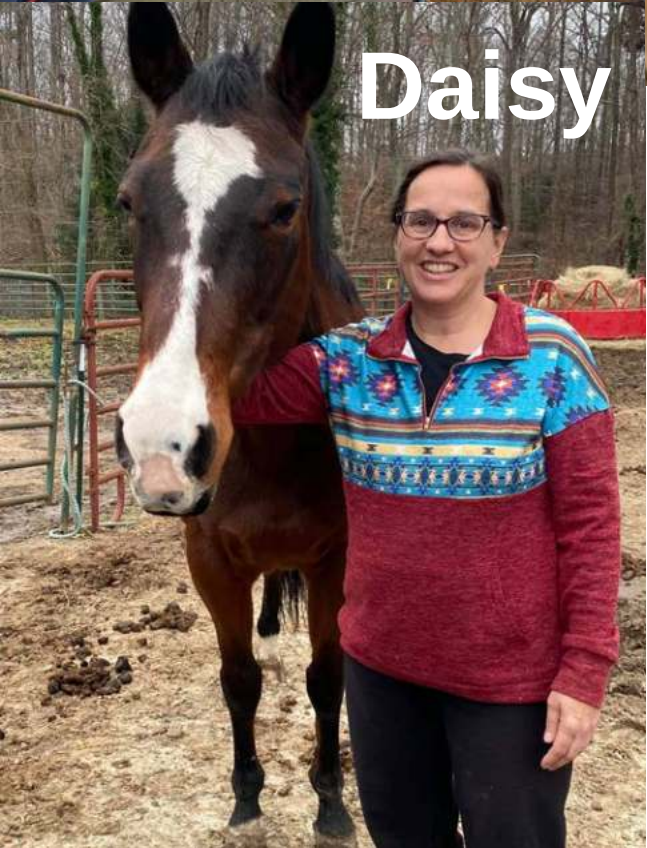
Jade (left)



Lacey



Sally



Daisy

Success Stories

These are just a few of
the **60 horses** that METS
directly helped to
transition in 2020!

Join



www.mdhorsecouncil.org

Support



www.mdequinetransition.org

Read



www.equiery.com

www.mdequinetransition.org * 410-970-6474 * info@mdequinetransition.org