

**The Chandler Report, Introducing Chandler, the Newest Addition to the Hope Foal Herd.
By Kathy Johnson, Executive Director Medicine Horse Program**



Chandler is a buckskin colt, part Welsh pony and part something else. He arrived at Medicine Horse in mid December, walking on his hind legs. "A bi-ped!" I thought.

The driver who shipped Chandler to Medicine Horse said that they were not able to touch him to load him for his journey. Instead, they formed a chute and ran him into the trailer. That is exactly how we unloaded him as well, forming a chute and letting him run to his stall. Only he did most of it rearing and bucking.

Someone had somehow put a halter on his head, many months ago. It was already too small, and growing into his nose. The problem was we couldn't catch him to get it off. In fact, we couldn't touch him at all.

We spent about a month at his stall during feeding time. He finally let us touch his head. But, he was very suspicious and would often bolt away. He is outstandingly athletic, and shows piaffe, passage, Spanish walk, and all the airs above the ground. I am almost certain he is half Andalusian.

Medicine Horse staff was extremely patient with Chandler, and took at whole different tack with him than the other foals. He had to *want* to come to us. There would be no sneaking a leadrope around his neck, no hanging on to him if left the scene, and no cowboys to rope him as was sometimes suggested. Staff spent extra time with him at feeding, just sitting in his stall with him, and then starting to scatch his neck. Day by day, the white around his eye began to fade. He started coming up at feeding time rather than running to the back of his stall. He let me rub his

face and around his ears. I had to stay low, sitting on the feed trough. If I stood up and made a move for his halter, he would bolt to the back of his run.

Eventually I was able to slip his old halter off his head. This was a mistake in afterthought, as we had not yet stumbled upon the Double Halter Method. Now, how do I get a new safety halter on? Creativity was key. I learned that if I kept the feed bucket in my lap and stayed low, sitting down, then Chandler was much less fearful. Eventually I held the halter in the feed bucket and Chandler learned to put his head in the halter. But, I couldn't get the strap over his ears to buckle it, or the feed bucket would fall off my lap, startling him and making me start the whole process all over. Because the foals are often far too shy to have more than one person in their stall, we start with one and gradually get them used to more. Working alone, we often feel like we don't have enough hands.

I finally rigged a binder twine to the earpiece of the halter, and snapped the feed bucket to my coat! Then I had an extra hand. We call this "the Third Hand" Method. Within 5 minutes I had the halter on. Within 15 minutes, Chandler had it off. I was able to repeat the process the next day. Not long after that, something changed in Chandler's eye. He got a sweet, soft, doe-like look in his eye. He came to the fence to watch me if I started working with another foal. He started coming right up to me, and let me snap a lead rope to him.



Chandler and Kathy demonstrate the Third Hand Double Halter Method--note snap on vest

I have been able to scratch his neck, to stand beside him and to touch his back. I can lead him short distances, but we have a long way to go. Chandler has already started work in the Hope Foal class. Because of his beauty and intelligence, the girls are drawn to him. Because of his

innate shyness and lack of trust in people, he will teach us all a great lesson in trust, patience, and creative colt handling.