

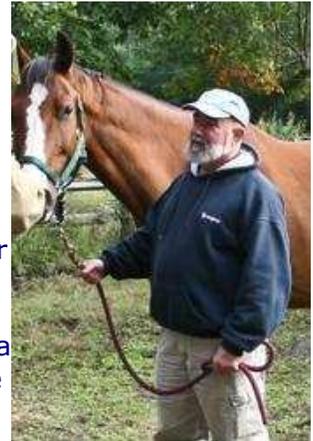
Humane Education at the MSPCA

12 Questions for...Roger Lauze

Equine Rescue and Training Coordinator, the MSPCA at Nevins Farm in Methuen, Massachusetts

1. What is a typical day for you working at the MSPCA at Nevins Farm?

A normal day for me working here at Nevins usually starts out like any animal care giver in the barn. After our morning meeting we turn the horses out and do the morning chores. After the chores are finished my days vary. I might spend time teaching other staff members to drive the trailers. I might spend time working on a presentation that we give to other groups about emergency equine rescue. I am responsible for maintaining the trucks and trailers. I might transport horses to or from Nevins. There might be an emergency call that I would have to respond to and transport a horse to one of the Animal Hospitals in the area. If I am working at a horse sporting event, which means I could be as far west as Illinois, north to Canada and south to Florida, my day is much different. Ten times a year from April to October we will be at a horse sporting event. My day there would entail working with the Safety Coordinators and Veterinarians to make sure everything is in place to provide the best veterinary care and transportation we can to ensure the safety of the Equine Athletics that participate in these events.



2. What exactly is "equine rescue?"

I think what we do every day at Nevins is equine rescue, what I do I would refer to as emergency equine rescue. We provide twenty-four hour emergency equine rescue service to Veterinarians anywhere in New England. If the Veterinarian is faced with a situation where a horse is down and not able to get up or they are trapped and not able to get themselves out or they are stranded they can call us. We will respond with our specialized equipment. We are able to move down horses safely, lift them out of holes or ditches and we are able to provide a sling for use with helicopter rescues.

3. What types of special equipment do you use?

The piece of rescue equipment we use the most is the Rescue Glide. The Rescue Glide was developed by the MSPCA and Chip Fisher; it is still produce by Chip and distributed by us. The Rescue Glide is basically a backboard or stretcher for horses. We are able to move down horses safely and relatively easily.

We also carry the UC Davis Large Animal Lift which is used for rescues where you need to lift an animal out of a hole or a ditch. The last piece of big equipment we carry is the Anderson Sling which is used for lifting animals that need to be stabilized for a period of time and its original intent is for helicopter rescues. We have done a helicopter rescue of a horse off a mountain in Connecticut. We also carry other smaller equipment that the Veterinarian might need in a rescue but not carry as part of the regular equipment, such as splints.

4. How long have you been with the MSPCA?

I have worked for the MSPCA for over twenty nine years. I have worked at a number of different facilities and held different positions but I have been in my present position for fifteen years and I like this position the best.

5. What changes have you seen at Nevins during your career?

I came to Nevins in 1985 to run the horse and farm animal adoption and surrender programs. When I arrived here the driveway wasn't paved and there were pot holes everywhere. The small animal shelter was a small red building that consisted of three rooms on the ground floor: a holding area, a small lobby, and the adoption room. In both the holding area and the adoption room cats were housed over the dog kennels. You can imagine the stress that the animals must have experienced. The staff consisted of four people and the numbers of animals that we received was higher than the number received now. The horse barn was painted in a very dark color and the floors of the stall were a wooden cobblestone which was very slippery when wet. There were no phones in the barn. When we would get a call or had to make a call we had to go to the shelter. Every animal except the poultry was housed in the barn, we had no out building for the sheep and goats or pigs and there was no isolation space for new animals. We didn't have a ring to work horses or have potential adopters ride. We had to move horses out of a pasture area so someone could ride. Compare those conditions to Nevins today and you can see how far we have come.

6. What training, education, and experience do you need to perform your job?

I have a BS in Biology and a minor in secondary education. I think a degree in one of the animal sciences is important. But I think it is more important to have experience in horse behavior and working in emergency situations. The other skill that most people don't think of is being able to drive trucks and trailers, we have to be able to bring our trucks and trailers as close to the injured horse as possible. It is a skill to be able to maneuver the vehicles to the exact spot you need it in-ask some of the newer members of the barn staff how hard it is to learn that skill.

7. Do you work with animals other than horses?

Now I work with the all the other farm animals, my favorite animal besides horses are pigs. They are the most intelligent of the farm animals and if you are going to work with them you have to out-think them. At one point in my time at Nevins I was managing the small animal shelter as well as the barn.

8. When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wasn't very animal orientated when I was young so I am sure that I wanted to be a police officer or firefighter. It wasn't until I was in college that I found my true calling.

9. Other than animal welfare organizations, where else might there be people performing your type of work?

There are a few people who have started private equine ambulance services, many of the Universities that have an animal hospital are now using rescue glides. Some of the horse sporting events have their own ambulance service. There are many states that have disaster animal response teams that have set up trailers in case of a natural disaster.

10. What is the most gratifying part of your work?

The most gratifying part of my work is seeing a horse that I helped rescue out of a bad situation and transported to a Veterinary Hospital make a full recovery. A close second is hearing a story of a rescue performed by people I trained.

11. What is the most difficult or frustrating part of your work?

The most frustrating part of my work is horses that have been neglected to the point that they are barely alive. There is no reason for anyone to let any animal get to that condition. There are so many ways to find help so horses do not have to reach that state. I have absolutely no respect for anyone that can do that to any animal.

12. Why horses, Roger? Do you feel you have a special bond with them?

Good question; I didn't get into horses until I was in college. One of my professors had driving and draft horses and I worked summers at his farm. I found I almost missed my true love. Horses and I seemed to understand each other, I sometimes think I should have been born in a different era or I must have been a teamster in a previous life or better yet maybe I was a horse in a previous life. Most people assume I like to ride horses, I do not ride horses, I drive horses, but you will never see me on the back of a horse. If you see me at Nevins ask me about my theory of riding and you will see why I don't ride.

-interviewed by Caitlin Andrews for the MSPCA