

Horse rescue organizations are, of course, also affected by the rapidly rising costs. Second Chance Ranch (SCR) houses 30-plus horses at a time. Even more so, we are affected by the slow to nonexistent adoption market. There have always been more horses needing help than we can possibly take in – and now the flow of horses moving and being adopted has become stagnant. I have a waiting list a mile long here at SCR.

The horses which come off of the track are typically very fit and healthy. However, we are also seeing an increase in the number of retired racing Thoroughbreds in the community (not coming directly from the racetrack) who are in dire need of food, vet and farrier services. These horses take much longer to rehabilitate and more groceries to bring them to full health. With fewer adoptions to support our mission at Second Chance Ranch, we have to depend more on general donations and grants. We struggle each month to stay afloat, but somehow we keep going. If we can make it through this year, it will give us time to implement organizational changes.

The newly introduced Prodigious Fund from Emerald Downs (whereby owners of Thoroughbreds racing at Emerald Downs can donate a percentage of their horses' earnings to the fund to help support the rehabilitation and re-homing of retired racehorses) is very timely! By June we had achieved 54 percent participation of owners. This fund will be paid out at the end of the meet this year. The horse racing community's participation in helping off-the-track horses thrive will only strengthen and support the sport overall.

SCR is reaching out to a specific adoption audience of experienced horse owners who own horse property. New horse owners are thoroughly educated about the cost and challenges of owning a horse today.

We are developing a new program in which horses can be adopted or leased out to a family via the sponsorship of a particular horse by a third party. The horse would leave our ranch and be provided for by an approved adoptor, who has the time and knowledge to care for the horse, while the monthly expenses would be paid for by a "sponsor." This is a great way to provide a home for a horse and, at the same time, give a child or family the joy of owning a horse which they could not otherwise afford.

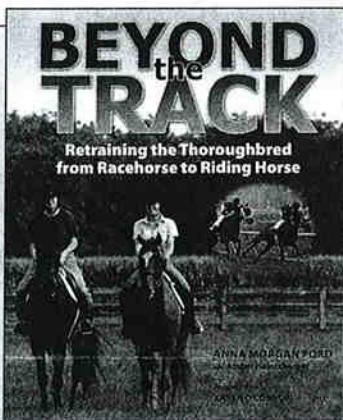
Horse ownership may never be without challenges; however, I do think the current trend will change. The American economy fluctuates and never stays the same for long. The fate of our country's wild horses will always be threatened, and there will always be organizations to fight for their safety and protection. Our domesticated horses – whether athletic sport horses or backyard pets – have earned and deserve the same vigilance. You can make a difference by remaining educated and persistent when it

comes to legislative issues regarding our agricultural community and our horses – both wild and domestic.

SCR is a resource for the horse racing community. This, and other programs such as ours, needs your support by donation to keep our programs in place. Please consider giving to organizations that support and take responsibility for

homeless horses or consider fostering or sponsoring a horse.

*To keep up on ranch happenings, [www.secondchanceranch.org](http://www.secondchanceranch.org). Second Chance Ranch is a nonprofit animal rescue sanctuary based in Elma which is dedicated to equine welfare and specializes in horse rehabilitation, adoption and consignment.*



## **Beyond the Track – Retraining the Thoroughbred from Racehorse to Riding Horse**

*by Anna Morgan Ford with Amber Heintzberger*

*Beyond the Track* is a wonderful book about retraining and rehabilitating Thoroughbred racehorses after they leave the track. For anyone who is interested in purchasing or adopting an off-the-track Thoroughbred (OTTB), this is a must-read book.

Ford is the program director for New Vocations Racehorse Adoption Program and has overseen the

training of over 1,000 retired racehorses. She gives an overview and explains in detail what one might need to know in regards to bringing an ex-racehorse home.

Step-by-step processes are included for ground work, including details such as applying fly spray, breaking bad habits learned at the track and simply leading a horse. The author shows readers how to introduce longeing and pointers for making the first ride a success. The book provides an abundance of tips from experienced horsewomen that will help new owners learn how to be patient with their new horse and move forward in a positive way.

Ford focuses on the bigger picture, all the while never skipping a small step or important detail. She includes how horses were trained at the track and how that will affect their new lessons – for example, riders must learn that riding on a tight rein actually means “go” at the track, not “slow down,” as is common in other disciplines and how new owners can go about changing learned behaviors. Ford also covers lameness and health injuries, as well as common hoof issues.

The book is accompanied by 218 color photos, complete with captions, that help the reader understand the text, including images of horses at the track and horses being transitioned.

It doesn't appear that the authors missed any important element. They are honest about what to expect from an OTTB and how to positively re-train and transition an ex-racehorse into a new, happy lifestyle. This book would help any OTTB owner give their horse the solid education needed to excel in any new career.

This instructional and informational book is well worth \$29.95 and can be found online at [www.horseandriderbooks.com](http://www.horseandriderbooks.com).

— *Andrea Ru*

*Beyond the Track* is far superior to any other published material available on the subject of off-the-track Thoroughbreds. This book drives home the reality of how specific and different racing Thoroughbreds are because of their training and experience. And Ford provides flawless and thorough detail, with insight into the minds of Thoroughbred racehorses, as it relates to life after racing. I really appreciate the tone of this book. Ford's handling and training philosophy is based entirely on setting the horse up for success, as well as achieving confidence and a comfort zone for both horse and handler.

This book is not just for new OTTB owners – many racing trainers take for granted the knowledge they have acquired over the years working with Thoroughbreds. Every trainer should be reminded of the process that is involved in transitioning a horse from racing to a new career or to retirement when choosing a qualified home for their soon-to-be OTTB. I highly recommend that every trainer keep a copy on hand in their office to give out or to recommend with each horse that leaves the track.

Keeneland Association in Kentucky has purchased a significant number of these books for the purpose of donating them to nonprofit groups that find homes for retired Thoroughbred racehorses. They have graciously offered to provide a complimentary copy of the book to every person who adopts a Thoroughbred from Second Chance Ranch (while supplies last). I could not be more thrilled with this opportunity!

— *Katie Merwin*