

Finding Archie

The “horse community” banded together to find Laura Kotimäki-Hurd’s horse.



Laura Kotimäki-Hurd with her horse Archie; they were reunited after the Woolsey Fire broke out in Malibu.

BY SUZIE MILLER

The equestrian community has always been small, but I didn't realize how small until this past fire. Thank you to whomever set up the Facebook page that reunited so many owners and animals. It was a prime tool, called LOST + FOUND: Reuniting Horses + Owners Separated by NOV 2018 CA Wildfires. People began posting photos of their horses that had been evacuated, and, like a small town, everyone came together and started looking for each horse posted.

Not only were people posting their own lost horses, but also those in the evacuation centers; one-by-one, owners were being reunited with their babies through the technology of Facebook. Sometimes there would be so many responses, but it was great news to see all of the updates.

When horses are evacuated, they are taken to whatever facility has availability at the time. For a time, I did not know where my baby girl was; I felt like I was going to die. I was lucky we found my girl by the end of the day, but for many more people, it was not that simple.

Even though my horse had been found, Laura Kotimäki-Hurd's (my trainer) horse, Archie, was still missing. Archie was freed during the fire to save his life, but his whereabouts were unknown. For my trainer, not only had her home burned to the ground, but she also may have lost her boy. Everything was overwhelming.

Again, the horse community came together. Archie's pictures were posted all over Facebook and shared so much that we were receiving responses from people in other states wanting to help. We literally spent days looking through

pictures posted online to see if we could find Archie. Many went to individual evacuation centers to look for him. This wasn't their horse, they don't know us, yet they were willing to drive to a center and spend their time finding a horse.

Archie's search even had its own hashtag: #helpfindarchie—so many within the horse community were looking for him on top of dealing with the disaster going on around them. The love and concern was overwhelming. And when he was found, so many felt the same joy as Kotimäki-Hurd did when they were reunited.

People talk about the horse community being snobby, but I have to say: When disaster strikes, we come together and take care of each other. Now our community is coming together to support people who lost their barns and equipment during the fires through donations and equipment. Malibu has a truly beautiful and generous horse community. ■