



Aspens Ojibwe  
HORSE SANCTUARY

***It's not just  
another horse...***

## **The responsibilities of becoming an Ojibwe horse Caregiver**

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2023

Breed specific care can be found in  
more detail under "Caring for your  
Ojibwe horse" at [www.aspenhorses.com](http://www.aspenhorses.com)

This pamphlet is an introduction for potential caregivers of Ojibwe horses. With the growing interest in these horses, their limited numbers, and the challenges of breeding from a small, dispersed population, looking after the Ojibwe horse requires a unique kind of commitment. Here are four key questions to ask yourself:

- Do I have the resources (land-based, financial, and knowledge) to sustain my horse care over years, not just months?
- Am I willing to learn how to care for a breed which has not adapted well to grazing rich pastures and provide sanctuary?
- Am I willing to sustain careful, day to day monitoring of my horse's food intake and body condition across *all* seasons?

- Can I be an advocate for the Ojibwe horse, acknowledging its importance to Indigenous culture and communities?

### ***A Special Responsibility***

'Caregiving' goes beyond traditional horse ownership. It celebrates the Ojibwe horses for their importance to Indigenous communities today, and in the future. The stories of these little horses and their resilience are now being told in collaborations among Elders, story tellers, artists, and caregivers. They are a source of cross-cultural inspiration and new understanding.

### ***What skills do I need as a horse handler and trainer?***

Some of the horses available for new homes may have had limited handling and training, and stallion behaviour around mares or other geldings can test

even experienced handlers. So, it is important to be realistic in assessing one's level of horsemanship. You may be a competent rider but know little about training a 'green' horse, and it is easy to get hurt.

### ***What are the costs of care?***

Horse keeping can be costly and must be sustained year-round. In 2023 it is reasonable to consider \$4000 a year *a conservative estimate of costs per horse* and you may also need to install fencing, shelter, and a water hydrant before your horse comes home.

### ***How much time does daily horse care take?***

Do not underestimate the dedication needed daily to check pastures and shelters, provide clean water and manage manure and hay. Winter conditions can be more challenging. Add to that handling, grooming, training, and public events.

### ***Breeding and Reproduction:***

Today, with so limited a breed population, so widely distributed, and so few stallions--there are big challenges in sustaining and growing the herd. To reduce the likelihood of inbreeding and genetic deformities it is essential that care givers consult with the Ojibwe Horse Society. The society keeps a registry and can advise on the most appropriate matches. Care givers are asked to ensure offspring are

registered and DNA samples shared. Cross breeding is also discouraged.

### ***Balancing Containment versus Re-wilding***

Once, these horses were semi feral, forming their own breeding groups on the edge of the Boreal Forest. They were grazers and foragers eating a diversity of native grasses, shrubs, tree shoots and herbs. Today the breed is prone to Metabolic Syndrome or EMS, and laminitis. **This is the reason** Ojibwe horse care is particularly challenging.

***The symbiotic relationship you will develop with an Ojibwe horse is unique in the equine world, and it's also a journey of discoveries and learning.***