

## Rest well, Sterling

*By Karen Everhart*

Sterling, a 30 year old Arabian cross, died suddenly today. He ate enthusiastically this morning and was standing in the sun, enjoying a beautiful spring day when we left for lunch at a local restaurant. We had a couple of errands to run and were away from the ranch for about 2 hours. When we returned we saw Sterling lying in the grass, which was very unusual for the 'energizer bunny.' When we checked on him, he was gone. There was no evidence of a struggle. It appears that he suffered no pain.

Sterling was listed on Craig's list - Kansas City in December 2007. The ad was sent to us and we asked a KC volunteer to check him out and report back. Sterling was skin and bones, with no life in his eyes, only able to eat his own manure though a round bale of hay was available. His owner stated that the Vet had told her he needed his teeth floated. She said she did not have the money, though she had just castrated a new 2 year old colt she had purchased. We called the Vet who told us that the horse would be dead within 30 days if nothing was done to intervene.



A decision was made to rescue Sterling and he arrived at Rainbow Meadows on Jan. 13, 2008. When he arrived this 14h boy weighed around 600 pounds. We immediately started him on a refeeding program and had restored him to health by April 2008. Once he was up to weight and doing well, it was time to assess his status as a riding horse. A young volunteer, Paxton Kerley, who was taking riding lessons with me, agreed to assist with his assessment. The rest is history.....

Sterling knew his "stuff." He ran barrels. He ran poles. He did western pleasure. He did it all. And, he did it with the energy of a 4 year old. Paxton fell in love and pleaded with her parents to allow her to adopt him. The Kerley family live in Sedan and needed a place for Sterling to live. David and I agreed to board him if a decision was made for Paxton to adopt. Everyone agreed that Sterling was made for Paxton. He could teach her everything she needed to know about riding and he would have a wonderful life here at the ranch with his friends.

Paxton was totally in love with her boy. She came out regularly and rode or just groomed him. He adored all of the attention. That same summer Paxton decided to compete for the local rodeo queen position. With Sterling's guidance, this young lady on her little sparkling white Arabian knocked the socks off of the judges and they awarded her the crown and sash. I think Paxton was 10 feet tall. They went on to participate in 4-H events nearly every year and Sterling, ever closer to 30 years of age, continued to perform like a youngster.



Sterling has been a part of our herd here at Rainbow Meadows for 3.5 years; not nearly long enough. We will miss his enthusiasm at feeding time. We will miss his orneriness. We will miss seeing him in the pasture. He has been "family."

Rest well, Sterling. When we see you at Rainbow Bridge, it will be time to ride, again.

