

## Tuskegee student Fallon Blackwood indicted in Alabama and North Carolina; owners say she promised their horses a better life.



Feb 03, 2019

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DVM360 MAGAZINE



(Photo courtesy of Blount County Jail.)

Fallon Blackwood, a 24-year-old veterinary student at Tuskegee University, was **indicted** in October of 2018 by the state of Alabama on 13 counts of acquiring a horse under false pretense with the intent to defraud. Blackwood has similar charges against her in North Carolina. Reports on sites such as **netposse.com**, the online home of Stolen Horse International, accuse Blackwood of offering to rehome horses in need but actually selling them to slaughterhouses for cash instead.

The 13th count of the indictment involves the experience of Lindsay Rosentrator, who spoke with dvm360 recently about her dealings with Blackwood.

Rosentrator says she went to school for equestrian studies and equestrian law and ethics in addition to being around horses for most of her life. So when the financial obligation of keeping her horse Willie became too much, she made a Facebook post hoping to find him a new home. It wasn't long before Rosentrator received a message from Blackwood, who claimed to be in need of a pasture mate for her own horse.

"She told me she was a vet student," Rosentrator says. "She told me she had been around horses her whole life and that she was on track to graduate."

The day Blackwood came to Rosentrator's residence to view Willie, she arrived with a trailer, Rosentrator says. Blackwood wanted to take Willie that day, but that wasn't what Rosentrator says they had agreed upon. She told Blackwood she wasn't ready—she needed more time and didn't have a formal contract written up. But Blackwood had a rebuttal to everything, Rosentrator says.

"She said she wouldn't be able to come back the following weekend because she was about to start rotations in vet school, which was going to entail her being on call every weekend. So she wasn't going to be able to get away again soon since

we were a three-hour drive for her," Rosentrator says.

Rosentrator says Blackwood came across as patient, mature and introverted that day—that she seemed like a nice person.

She says she thought that Blackwood, being a veterinary student, would be able to offer her horse a great home, and that she needed to take advantage of the opportunity before it was gone. "That's what made my decision have to be so quick," Rosentrator says. "She's very convincing."

Using a spiral notebook she had in her car, Rosentrator wrote up an informal contract stating that Blackwood would be receiving ownership of Willie for zero dollars and if anything were to happen, Rosentrator would have first right of refusal to take the horse back from Blackwood. Later that evening, Rosentrator emailed a digitized copy of the agreement to Blackwood to sign.

She never sent it back.

In the following weeks, Rosentrator says she reached out to Blackwood on numerous occasions, asking for pictures of Willie. But Blackwood wouldn't comply, claiming she was in class, off the property or busy. It was then that Rosentrator went online and found that Blackwood allegedly did business with kill-buyers, according to several rescue groups.

"I could never fathom doing that to any kind of animal. I didn't realize that someone who was going to school to protect and help animals could do something so ... heinous," Rosentrator says.

### **Find Willie Facebook page**

View the Find Willie Facebook page [here](#).

Blackwood is now tied to more than [50 missing horse reports](#) from Stolen Horse International.

Pamela Miller, reports manager at Stolen Horse International, says people like Blackwood are often looking for a quick way to make money.

"It's probably to pay for her veterinary school ... She got all these horses for free. So she turned around and either sold them at an auction house or worked with a kill-buyer to have them shipped down to Mexico," Miller says.

According to Miller, horses brought to slaughterhouses in Mexico are sold for approximately 50 cents a pound. She estimates that over 95 percent of the horses in the cases against Blackwood had medication in their systems, meaning they shouldn't have been slaughtered for consumption. Willie, for example, was on ringbone medications.

"The medication that was in that horse's body is now being consumed by individuals or animals. It's not healthy. It can cause [the consumer] medical problems," Miller says.

According to the online reports, Blackwood used the same story for all of the horses she obtained. After identifying horses in need of homes on Facebook and Craigslist, she messaged the owners claiming to need a pasture mate for her horse. She told the owners she didn't have any money but the horse would be under the best medical care because she was a vet student.

Both Rosentrator and Miller recommend that before completing a rehoming transaction, horse owners obtain background checks and call the organization the individual says he or she is affiliated with, as well as any references. In addition, Miller suggests microchipping the horse and taking pictures of the individual loading the horse into the trailer.

Blackwood was arrested at an Alabama rodeo on January 15. She quickly posted \$15,000 bail from Blount County Jail and has returned to class, according to **local media reports**.