

Popeye Update: Concerns About Animal Welfare in Latah

Idaho Animal Rescue Network | October 28, 2025



Since our original post in August 2025, Popeye, the horse owned by a Latah County Sheriff's Deputy and his wife, has been moved to another nearby property.

Many people have asked for an update on Popeye, the severely malnourished horse in Latah County owned by a Latah County Sheriff's Deputy and his wife. There is a great deal to share.

Not long after our initial post about Popeye on August 18, 2025, and the Latah County Sheriff's Office response defending their deputy, our inbox began filling with messages. Some came from concerned community members. Others came from individuals who identified themselves as Latah County employees. We were told of many concerning comments made by the deputy about Popeye and our article. This deputy likes to refer to us as "Facebook Karens" when discussing the matter with others (we have been called worse). These comments were allegedly made to a few different individuals. If true, this is incredibly troubling and dismissive of the seriousness of the situation.

The photos below speak for themselves. They show that Popeye was not simply an aging horse in poor health, but a horse who was not receiving the proper care and nutrition he needed. Thanks to the community for speaking up and being a voice for Popeye; he is now making substantial progress. Your compassion and persistence have made a real difference in his recovery and well-being.

July 2025

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The ISDA Report Raises More Questions

We obtained the full Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) report regarding Dr. Scott Barnes' visit to check on Popeye on August 12, 2025. The report was brief, yet revealing.

SEE THE REPORT >>> Dr. Barnes Aug. 12, 2025 ISDA Report on Popeye

Dr. Barnes documented that Popeye's body condition score (BCS) was a 2 on the Henneke scale. For reference, this scale ranges from 1 to 9, with a score of 1 indicating an emaciated horse in critical condition and a score of 9 indicating extreme obesity. A score of 2 is dangerously thin and requires immediate intervention and monitoring.

During the visit, Dr. Barnes noted that he made contact only with the owner, aside from the LCSO deputy who originally referred the case to ISDA. In the report, the owner claimed that Popeye uses a private veterinarian in Colton, Washington. However, the report does not indicate that Dr. Barnes requested any medical records from that veterinarian or attempted to speak with them. This is especially concerning because we have text messages from the owner herself acknowledging that Popeye had not seen this veterinarian. Instead, she said she only spoke with them over the phone about his diet.

There is more. The photo documentation included with the report showed clear and well-lit images of the healthy horses on the property. The only photo of Popeye was dark and difficult to see, which further downplayed his condition. For an animal whose welfare is under investigation, this lack of accurate documentation should not happen.

Simply put, Dr. Barnes examined Popeye but appears to have accepted the owner's statements without any verification. No veterinarian records requested. No third-party interviews conducted. No follow-up scheduled.

This lack of investigative effort connects to something even more unsettling. In regard to a previous report about Popeye's situation in October 2023, Dr. Barnes allegedly stated to the person who made the complaint that Popeye "appears to be a horse at the end stages of life and sometimes that is not pretty." That statement created an excuse for inaction. Now that Popeye is improving with proper nutrition, it raises the question of whether that earlier assumption delayed necessary intervention.

Sadly, this is not an isolated example. We are seeing a recurring pattern in recent ISDA

investigation reports. Witnesses are not contacted. Veterinarians are not consulted. Reports rely heavily on what the owners say rather than what the evidence shows. We understand that investigators are busy and overworked, but thoroughness is essential. When animals are suffering, shortcuts create real harm.

What Happened After Our Initial Coverage?

Since our initial posts about Popeye were released in August, Popeye was moved to a different property nearby. The owner did not publicly provide a reason for the move. Because many people in the community recognize Popeye and care about his well-being, some contacted us to share this information. People have continued to keep an eye on him from afar. Contrary to what some claim, we do not trespass. We know the law, and we respect property boundaries. We also do not encourage anyone to trespass or to approach Popeye. Most importantly, no one should attempt to feed him. Sudden or improper feeding can make a malnourished horse very ill.

What has been noted since the move is exactly what we wanted to see. Magically, Popeye has started to gain weight and is looking and feeling noticeably better. Was it the public outcry that discredited the owner's claims that "he is just an old horse" that finally spurred action? Was it peer pressure from Latah County coworkers? We may never know. But what we do know is that we got their attention.

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Popeye still has progress to make. We hope his owners continue providing the proper nutrition and care he so clearly needed all along. Excuses only delay the recovery of an animal that depends entirely on humans for its survival. It has now been demonstrated that

when he receives appropriate care, Popeye thrives.

When a member of law enforcement is involved in a case like this, accountability matters even more. The public must be able to trust that those sworn to uphold the law are not given special treatment and that proper investigative steps are taken every single time.

All we ever wanted was for Popeye to receive proper care and nutrition. We had already proven that with the right support, he gained weight and his condition improved. When he was removed from that care, his health declined. That should have been a red flag for every agency involved. Instead, excuses were relied upon, and critical time was lost.

To Popeye's owners, offers of assistance with feed, veterinary care, and anything else needed are still available to you from various resources. We genuinely hope that you, or whoever is currently caring for Popeye, will continue supporting his health and building on the positive progress he has already made.

Popeye is not a headline or a rumor. He is a living animal who deserves consistent oversight, nutrition, and compassion. His condition did not happen overnight. His recovery will take time and continued effort. Things appear to be going in the right direction ... for now.

We will continue to monitor his case, request updates from the responsible agencies, and speak out when necessary. The public deserves honesty and transparency. Popeye deserves protection.

Source & Contact

Current story:

<https://idahorescue.com/2025/10/28/popeye-update-concerns-about-animal-welfare-in-latah-county/>

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