Written by Steve Frank
Wednesday, 13 March 2013 07:32

“We opened another investigation in February of 2010 because we received reports of two dead horses in their pasture among the live horses, and the horses had been there at least a couple of days and no one had done anything about it,” that from Amy Hudnall, president of Horse Helpers of the High Country. Horse Helpers is frustrated with the lack of action to end what they see as a pattern of abuse for horses at Dutch Creek Trails, so they asked the press to gather to show what they’ve seen at the Valle Crucis trail riding business, “The problem that I had then and up until now was that none of the people with really intimate information was willing or comfortable for speaking out.” Hudnall said their case was bolstered when Heather Hodges came forward. Hodges, who lives on the property, and whose family owns the property Dutch Creek Trails moved to said, “I’ve worked for them, I’ve tried to help them, I’ve tried to talk to them—several people have talked to them—I’m at my breaking point when I tried to get a horse up and he she was dying. And then all Keith (Ward) would say was ‘Oh Buddy, I should have done something a long time ago.’” Hodges, and she lives on the property and has seen the dead and dying horses—and she said, how she has observed how the business operates, removing animals as their conditions deteriorate. Hudnall said that she is frustrated with Watauga County not taking action, with Animal Control on one side, with few employees to monitor the situation, the Sheriff’s Department waiting to be asked for their investigative help, and the DA’s office, waiting for an investigation to be presented to them. Meanwhile, Hudnall says, horses are dying at Dutch Creek Trails.