

## Statewide search on for two stolen horses

By EMILY Le COZ, Staff Writer

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*Boogie was one of the horses stolen.*

**Two horses stolen from Clarksdale early Sunday morning sparked a statewide search by law-enforcement officials while the pets' devastated owners issued a plea for help.**

"We are asking anyone who saw any activity that night to please come forward to help with the investigation," said Sassy Mauldin, the owner of a 2-year-old red sorrel horse named Boogie.

Boogie and Ace, a black Tennessee walking horse belonging to Kenneth Hood, were discovered missing from Hood's pasture at the intersection of Lee Drive and Stovall Road at approximately 1:30 a.m. Sunday. They were last seen around 11:30 p.m. Saturday, Mauldin said.

Investigators are following a tip on a champagne-colored, four-door Dodge pickup truck seen in the area around the time of the disappearance, said Billy Benson, investigator for Mississippi Agriculture and

Livestock Theft Bureau.

The same truck was later seen in Clarksdale with an aluminum trailer attached to it, Benson said. Investigators believe the thief used either that trailer or a different, non-aluminum trailer discovered missing from the area the same night.

"My granddaughter saw the truck over there close to midnight, and a friend of ours saw it shortly after that," said Hood. "Nobody thought nothing, because people stop there all the time and talk."

Hood said the disappearance of his 5-year-old horse has shocked and overwhelmed him. It is, he said, one of the saddest moments of his life.

"It's a horrible thing, because I love my horse. And it bothered me so bad, because I was breaking (Mauldin's) horse, and she loved it," said Hood. "Who would ever think somebody would steal a horse right on the highway, especially on a Saturday night?"

Both owners hope somebody will step forward with information and are offering a \$500 reward for any tips leading to the return of their horses and the arrest of the culprit or culprits.

According to **Stolen Horse International, Inc.**, an estimated 40,000 to 55,000 horses in the United States go missing or are stolen each year. Many are sold for profit as pets or meat, the agency said on its Web site.

Clarksdale Police Detective Capt. Danny Hill, who is helping Benson and the Coahoma County Sheriff's Department with the case, said horse theft in Clarksdale is extremely rare.

Statewide, however, the practice occurs on a "pretty regular basis," said Benson, without citing a figure. About 40 percent of all stolen animals in Mississippi are recovered, Benson said. And Mauldin hopes Ace and Boogie will be among them. She said she can't bare to lose them forever.

"They're both like family members. (Hood's) horse was bought from a sale as young horse who had been abused, and he's loved him like a child," Mauldin said. "My horse was born to my mare two years ago, and my husband and I were present from birth and raised her like a pet. They are our pride and joy." Ace is a solid black, neutered male with no markings. He weighs more than 1,000 pounds and measures 16 hands - about 5 feet, 4 inches. He has a small dent near the left shoulder from rope burn and spots on the front legs where hair doesn't grow.

Boogie is a red-colored female with a white diamond shape on her face and a brown circle in the middle of the diamond. She weighs about 800 pounds and measures 15 hands - about 5 feet. Her front left foot also has white markings.

Citizens with information about the theft of Ace and Boogie are asked to contact the Clarksdale Police Department at 621-8156 or the Mississippi Agriculture and Livestock Theft Bureau at 1-800-678-2660. They can also call Mauldin at 627-9663 or 514-5014, and Hood at 627-7765 or 621-8001.

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