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## Horse-slaughter suspects arrested

### United Press International

RENO — Five men described as cowboys were arrested for the slaughter of more than 40 wild horses and burros on the open range in Northern Nevada in 1987 and 1988, it was announced Wednesday.

A total of 524 mustangs has been destroyed and federal officials said that while these were the first arrests, the investigation was continuing.

Federal grand jury indictments returned Tuesday were unsealed Wednesday accusing David Morehead, 37, of 10 counts of destroying 34 horses and three burros. Shannon Brennan, 27, was charged in the same indictment with two of the counts involving 29 horses.

Both men, who work the C-Punch Ranch in the Lovelock area, were also accused of the illegal sale of two wild horses

at the Gallagher Livestock Sales Yard in Fallon in June 1988.

The second indictment charged Eugene John Thacker, 20, David Thacker, 22, and Ronald E. Hage, in his early 20s, with five counts involving the fatal shooting of five horses, also in Pershing County. The three were all from Gosgrove, a small community between Lovelock and Battle Mountain.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Will B. Mattly said each count carries a maximum 1-year prison term and a \$100,000 fine.

Arraignment was set for Feb. 3.

There are an estimated 30,000 wild horses roaming the public range in Nevada. Ranchers complain they trample and eat forage that could be used for livestock.

Bob Stewart, a spokesman for the Bureau of Land

Management, which is responsible for the safety of the wild horses, said the agency was "very gratified to have the U.S. Attorney moving forward with this case."

The investigation, he said, was continuing as a "priority issue."

"The law enforcement investigators have interviewed in excess of 200 people, walked countless miles in search of evidence and have done a thorough job.

"We're confident a conviction will come out of this case as a result of this law enforcement work," said Stewart.

The investigation began five months ago after a helicopter pilot sighted the remains of about a dozen wild horses in a remote area 50 miles north of Austin in Central Nevada. Forty horses were found shot to death by a high-powered rifle.