

Sheriff reports 4 suspects in horse deaths

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Sheriff Paul McGrath today said there are four suspects in the case of wild mustangs found shot to death earlier this month in the Pinion Hills area southeast of Carson City.

McGrath also said the shootings appeared to have been two incidents, the first occurring in early February and the second in the latter part of the month.

Further postmortem results this morning on the bodies of the eight animals turned up more "hard evidence" in the case, McGrath said.

McGrath said that as of Friday it appeared that all of the horses had been shot in the heart and that an unborn foal that was said to have been mutilated was in fact the victim of predator mutilation, not human mutilation.

McGrath based his statements on evidence obtained Friday when a local veterinarian and two sheriff's investigators performed postmortems on several of the carcasses of the slain horses.

However, sources confirmed this morning that pictures taken by BLM investigators showed a mutilated unborn foal which was among several mustangs found shot to death near Deer Run Road.

The picture clearly shows, according to sources, that the slain foal had its throat slashed and had also been shot.

One Pinion Hills area resident has said she discovered the dead animals and saw signs of mutilation on the unborn foal, but BLM investigator George High told the Nevada Appeal Monday that his inspection of the foal, along with its mother, showed no signs of mutilation.

"The pictures clearly show that this colt had its throat cut," the source said.

BLM spokesman Tim Reauwsatt said this morning, "I have seen these pictures. I still don't think there is any evidence to suggest that the injuries to the foal were done by an individual with a knife."

Reauwsatt said he believes the wounds on the foal were from predators.

But, Susan Lundstrom, who dis-

covered six dead horses plus the foal March 8 while she was riding horseback in the area, told the Appeal last week that it was clear that the foal's throat had been slashed after the foal was ripped from its mother's body after the mare's stomach had been slit open.

Lundstrom reported the incident to both the Carson City Sheriff's Office and the BLM.

High said he went to the Pinion Hills scene two days after Lundstrom reported the incident.

He said he did see the foal next to the mare but said he could find nothing like Lundstrom described.

"I did find the foal," said High.

"It had been drug away from its mother, but I didn't see any signs of mutilation.

High did say that when he first saw the foal that predators had begun to gnaw on the carcasses of it and the other dead horses.

On Friday investigators from the Carson City Sheriff's Department, along with local veterinarian Don Hittenmiller, performed postmortem examinations on several of the animals to gather additional evidence.

By this time predators had begun to attack the carcasses, and it was the opinion of both the sheriff's investigators, and the veterinarian that no mutilation had occurred.

Reauwsatt said the BLM is still working closely with the Sheriff's Department on the case.

Many of those who have followed the wild horse issue have claimed that the government agencies directly involved with the protecting the horses are "inclined too often to look the other way."

High told the Appeal he knew about the shootings as early as Feb. 22 but failed to either notify local area residents, or other area agencies.

He said he initially felt that if area residents knew about the shootings it would "probably ruin my investigation, and scare off any suspects."

That admission has upset many local residents who have said they feel those responsible for the slaughter of the horses may return to the area and try to take revenge on the residents.