

WHOA!

WILD HORSE ORGANIZED ASSISTANCE

INC.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

VELMA B. JOHNSTON

LOUISE C. HARRISON

GORDON W. HARRIS

HELEN A. REILLY

JOHN REILLY

A Foundation for the Welfare of
Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros

August 28, 1973

P. O. Box 555
Reno, Nevada 89504
Telephone 323-5908
Area Code 702

Yours is one of the many letters we are receiving concerning recent wire-service news releases carrying the prediction that wild horses in many areas of the West face almost certain starvation this winter due to over-population in certain areas and to extremely poor range conditions. The releases also indicate that one organization has begun stockpiling hay at its ranch in anticipation of a hard winter and continued federal inaction.

Although premature, and guesswork at best, charges of over-population may have some basis in fact at some future time, but until privately owned horses now in trespass on public lands are removed, there is no possible way to estimate the number of wild horses there are on the ranges, or whether there will be a starvation crisis. It is this type of conjecture that causes public concern and unwarranted criticism of those responsible for the welfare of wild horses and burros, including the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board.

The Advisory Board, a requirement of the Wild Horse and Burro Act, had its first meeting in January of this year and in its three meetings has reviewed in depth the regulations drawn up by the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service to carry out provisions of the Act. Some were approved by the Advisory Board, and changes were recommended to strengthen others. This assignment was completed by the Advisory Board in July of this year and submitted to the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior for their acceptance. The revised regulations went into effect on the 15th of this month, and the first to be carried out will be the removal of privately owned trespass horses. Individuals claiming ownership of horses or burros on public lands which are not authorized by a current license or permit must file their claims by November 15th, and thereafter begin the removal of their animals to which private ownership has been proved.

Catching will be done under the direct supervision of the bureau of Land Management or the Forest Service in order to safeguard wild horses that could easily be subjected to harassment or to claiming if strict proof of ownership were not required. With increased demands for horse-meat for human and animal consumption pushing the price to 32¢ per pound and more on the hoof, it is reasonable to predict that all privately owned horses will be claimed, and in some instances attempts will be made to claim ownership of wild horses running with, or in close proximity to, those privately owned animals now in trespass.

Relocation of excess numbers of wild horses to less populated areas was also brought out by the spokesman in the news release. Such a relocation program would be difficult, if not impossible, to carry out for two reasons:

#1 - provisions of the Wild Horse and Burro Act prohibit the relocation of wild horses or burros to areas of the public lands where they did not exist at the time of passage of legislation;

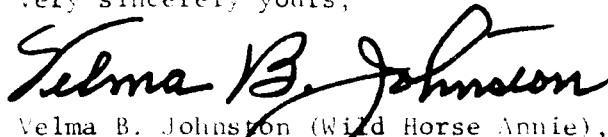
and #2 - any transfer to areas where they DID exist would inevitably meet with strong opposition from the varied interests already established there that consider these animals to be unwelcome intruders, even though the land does actually belong to the public - you and me - and those commercial users are there by permit only. The horror of the tragic illegal roundup of wild horses by ranching interests in Idaho earlier this year is still fresh in the minds of the public, and is indicative of the lengths to which these commercial interests will go to eliminate wild horses and burros. (SEE ENCLOSURE)

Although generally favored by the public that is not familiar with the immensity of the millions of acres of public lands upon which wild horses and burros roam, auxiliary feeding is virtually impossible to carry out, due to the inaccessibility of the habitat of the animals, and whereas stockpiling of hay might help less than a hundred wild horses through a hard winter, only the relief of over-grazing pressures on the ranges can be of significant help in assuring the survival of the animals.

Removal of privately owned trespass horses will materially reduce chances of starvation of the Wild Ones and allow a measure of range recovery which is the long term goal to correct present range inadequacy. Removal of trespass cattle as well, and in some instances reduction in the excess numbers of licensed cattle that have contributed to range damage, will allow for range recovery.

We hope the foregoing helps to clarify the situation for you, and please know how much we appreciate your contacting us in this matter.

Very sincerely yours,


Velma B. Johnston (Wild Horse Annie),
Chairman - Board of Trustees

140 Greenstone Drive,
Reno, Nevada 89504
March 9, 1974

TO THE EDITOR,
LOS ANGELES TIMES,
TIMES MIRROR SQUARE
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

My dear Sir:

After reading the article in the Sunday (Mar. 3rd) edition of your newspaper concerning legislation enacted by Congress for the protection, management and control of wild horses and burros, I can only imagine how appalled my supporters in behalf of these animals were when they read the comments attributed to me by your staff writer. I, too, was appalled. I have never made a statement that could be interpreted that the "law goes, perhaps, a bit too far", nor have I ever conceded that they (the wild horses) are multiplying rapidly. Such a statement would be presumptuous and irresponsible, as there is no agreement among biologists that such is the case.

Strongest opponents to recognition of the rights of wild horses and burros on public lands are those engaged in the domestic livestock industry whose dominant use of public lands (your land and mine) for private financial gain has somehow given them the idea the lands are their own exclusive property and everything not commercially profitable to themselves must be eliminated. This dominant use is no longer justified by the mere 1% of beef and 6% of sheep marketed nationwide that is raised on the public lands.

It is a belief shared by State Fish and Game Commissions whose livelihoods depend upon keeping the public lands abundantly stocked with target animals to provide a happy hunting ground for hunters and industries related to hunting. Wild horses and burros are not trophy animals, nor are they edible. They do not enrich the coffers of Fish and Game Commissions.

As for the opinion expressed by a spokesman for the Bureau of Land Management, that agency has been pressured for so many decades by private interest groups it is difficult for some of their personnel to adjust their thinking in

To the Editor
Page Two
March 9, 1974

positive terms when faced with the responsibility for the welfare of other than domestic livestock. He predicts it will be impossible to "manage and control" without the use of airplanes and mechanized vehicles. Decades of bloody and indiscriminate annihilation of wild horses and burros, under the agency's direction in order to make more grazing land available for domestic livestock, was a black chapter in the history of man's abuse of animals until an act of Congress in 1959 outlawed that expedient means of "management and control". It is unlikely the public will support any move to restore a practice that would again, inevitably, lead to over-zealous programs through its very expediency.

Passage of the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act does not provide the protection supporters had sought, and leans heavily toward management and control. It is a well-known fact among those most cognizant of the role played by state and local officials in carrying out the provisions of the Act that their participation in determination of ownership of free-roaming horses and burros will continue to result in abuses. As pointed out by the staff writer, it is not uncommon for ranchers and inspectors to simply agree: "You lie and I'll swear to it." Nor is it unusual that "inspectors go on our (the ranchers') word half the time anyway." Incidents occur also that verify the fact that "No inspector in his right mind is going to turn any wild horse loose", a statement attributed to a major buyer of wild horses for California pet food firms. Unfortunately, in order to move the Wild Horse and Burro legislation through Congress, as a compromise measure the provision for State and local agency participation was inserted into the original legislation, weakening its effectiveness for other than management and control due to prevailing attitudes on state and local levels.

In closing, may I say that contrary to the writer's evaluation of my opinions, the Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971 does NOT go too far, but to the contrary should be strengthened in some areas; and as for there being a population explosion, lacking studies of these animals at this time such a statement is purely prejudicial and speculative. Certainly it is not my opinion.

Velma B. Johnston Velma B. (Wild Horse Annie) Johnston

WHOA!

WILD HORSE ORGANIZED ASSISTANCE

INC.

A Foundation for the Welfare of
Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED READING FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN THE
EFFORT TO SAVE THE WILD HORSES AND BURROS OF OUR COUNTRY:

AMERICA'S LAST WILD HORSES by Hope Ryden

Publisher: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc.,
New York, New York

MUSTANG-WILD SPIRIT OF THE WEST by Marguerite Henry

Publisher: Rand-McNally, Chicago, Illinois

THE MUSTANGS by J. Frank Dobie

Publisher: Little, Brown & Company
Boston, Massachusetts

THE WILD HORSE OF THE WEST by Walker D. Wyman

Publisher: University of Nebraska Press

MUSTANGS: A RETURN TO THE WILD by Hope Ryden

Publisher: The Viking Press, New York, New York

SAN DOMINGO, THE MEDICINE HAT STALLION by Marguerite Henry

Publisher: Rand-McNally, Chicago, Illinois

THE WILD HORSE KILLERS by Mel Ellis

Publisher: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York

ASSES VS. JACKASSES by Wm. G. Long

Publisher: Criterion Inc., The Touchstone Press
Portland, Oregon

WILD BURRO RESCUE by Robert Franklin Leslie

Publisher: Childrens Press, Chicago, Illinois

THE BURRO by Frank Brookshier

Publisher: University of Oklahoma Press,
Norman, Oklahoma

SAVE THE MUSTANGS! HOW A FEDERAL LAW IS PASSED

by Ann Weiss

Publisher: Julian Messner/A Division of Simon and
Schuster, Inc., New York, New York

WILD HORSES OF CANADA by Norma Bearcroft

Publisher: J. A. Allen & Co., Ltd,
London, England

THE HORSE OF THE AMERICAS by Robert M. Denhardt

Publisher: University of Oklahoma Press,
Norman, Oklahoma

SAGEBRUSH COUNTRY by Donald Dale Jackson

Publisher: The American Wilderness
Time - Life Books, New York, New York

MARCH - 1977