

est. 1978

SYNOPSIS OF THE  
FOUR MAJOR WILD HORSE ADOPTION CASES

Bureau of Land Management  
U.S. Department of the Interior

CASE SYNOPSIS: Gary Baldwin, Oklahoma

Mr. Baldwin adopted 81 wild horses from BLM in Nevada as shown below:

<u>No. of Horses</u>	<u>Date Adopted</u>	<u>Where From</u>
41	December 12, 1977	Carson City, Nevada Palomino Valley
<u>40</u> 81	January 1, 1978	Carson City, Nevada

On March 20, 1978, the Bureau received information from Congressman Teno Roncalio's office that the horses had disappeared. Mr. Baldwin alleged that the horses had been transported to Antlers, Oklahoma, and pastured on land leased from the Weyerhaeuser Corporation.

A BLM special agent began an investigation of the case on May 16, 1978, and presented the case to Assistant U.S. Attorney James Edmundson of Muskogee, Oklahoma, on June 29, 1978, via Department of Interior Solicitor at Santa Fe, New Mexico. The case was heard by a Federal grand jury on July 31, 1978, but they did not take final action because Baldwin could not be found and was therefore unable to testify on his own behalf. The U.S. Marshall held a subpoena for Baldwin but was unable to locate him. Special Agent Wallace, BLM-Santa Fe, obtained duplicate subpoenas for both Baldwin and his associate, John Meier. Wallace located Baldwin's associate, served the subpoena, and both Baldwin and Meier appeared at the U.S. Attorney's office in Muskogee on January 4, 1979, at which time Baldwin was served his subpoena formally. They have agreed to appear before the grand jury February 5 and 6, 1979. The case is still being pursued.

CASE SYNOPSIS: Carl Mitts and Sam Sloan, Missouri

Carl Mitts and Sam Sloan of Sedalia, Missouri, had requested adoption of 2,000 horses, but BLM only approved adoption of 176 animals after a recommendation from the local humane society, as specified below:

		<u>Horses</u>	<u>Date</u>
Carl W. Mitts	(Craig)	19	11/30/78
	(Grand Junction)	10	11/30/78
Mitts and Sloan	(Rock Springs)	21	12/19/78
Carl W. Mitts	(Rock Springs)	16	2/22/78
	(Craig)	14	2/24/78
	(Grand Junction)	3	2/24/78
	(Rawlins)	11	2/24/78
	(Rock Springs)	40	5/19/78
	(Rock Springs)	42	8/3/78

On September 12, 1978, the Sheriff of Benton County notified BLM that the horses were being neglected. An investigator was in Sedalia within 24 hours and confirmed four dead, 13 missing, and 159 badly neglected. The agent removed the horses to a local fairground, fed, and cared for them. By the end of the month they were all reassigned to small adopters.

Since such neglect is not a violation of any federal statute, Mitts and Sloan were served warrants for misdemeanor charges under State humane laws: (1) for failure to feed and care for animals under humane conditions (\$500 bond posted) and (2) for failure to dispose of carcasses (\$100 bond posted). A trial is pending.

CASE SYNOPSIS: Don Hughes, Oregon

Don Hughes adopted 110 horses over the course of 2-1/2 years as shown below:

<u>No. of Horses</u>	<u>Date Adopted</u>	<u>Where From</u>
2	December 14, 1976	Burns, Oregon
6	December 21, 1976	" "
5	December 27, 1976	" "
5	March 16, 1977	" "
6	April 11, 1977	" "
6	April 18, 1977	" "
9	June 28, 1977	" "
1	August 18, 1977	" "
11	September 1, 1977	" "
2	September 3, 1977	" "
3	October 5, 1977	" "
7	October 18, 1977	" "
4	October 21, 1977	" "
6	November 25, 1977	" "
4	December 1, 1977	" "
5	December 8, 1977	" "
5	December 16, 1977	" "
7	January 5, 1978	" "
6	January 25, 1978	" "
9	February 16, 1978	" "
<u>1</u>	May 19, 1978	" "
110		
<u>- 1</u>	Transferred 1, November 25, 1977	
109		

A check of the status of the horses suggests that at least 74 are missing. Because the adoptor claimed that some of his horses had been moved to California, the evaluator was unable at the time (July 20, 1978) to verify whether the horses were missing or not. During the course of the next several months, the Burns District staff tried repeatedly to reach Hughes both by letter and in person, flew into the areas where the horses were supposed to be pastured with no success and finally sent Mr. Hughes a registered letter ordering him to produce the horses to which he refused to respond. A formal investigation was initiated on December 8, 1978.

Hughes was arrested on December 17, 1978, by BLM agents Johnson and Stine and a Modoc County, California, deputy sheriff at Hughes' home in New Pine Creek, California.

He was taken to Portland and held under \$25,000 bail charged with three violations of the Wild Horse and Burro Act:

- converting wild horses to his own use,
- causing the death of wild horses, and
- having them processed into a commercial product;

and one count of violating Title 18, Section 641 U.S.C. Theft of Government Property.

He has been assigned a public defender, waived a preliminary hearing set for Tuesday, January 2, 1979, and is scheduled to appear before the grand jury January 23-25, 1979.

CASE SYNOPSIS: Gary Graham/E.W. Thompson, Missouri

Mr. Graham was assigned 161 horses by the Rock Springs, Wyoming, office of BLM over the course of three months as shown below:

<u>No. of Horses</u>	<u>Date Adopted</u>	<u>Where From</u>
15	Aug. 5, 1977	Rock Springs, Wyoming
69	August 26, 1977	Rock Springs, Wyoming
14	Sept. 27, 1977	Craig, Colorado
2	Oct. 4, 1977	Craig, Colorado
44	Oct. 4, 1977	Rawlins, Wyoming
<u>17</u>	Oct. 19, 1977	Rock Springs, Wyoming
161		

Mr. Graham transported the horses to E.W. Thompson in Sedalia, Missouri. On December 27, 1977, a confidential informant (and former BLM employee) informed the Wyoming office that Mr. Thompson had sold 40 to 50 of his wild horses. Because BLM had no investigator in either Wyoming or the Eastern States Office, the investigation was not begun until March 7, 1978. The investigation disclosed that 142 horses were missing. The remaining 19 were repossessed by BLM. The BLM investigator worked closely with Assistant U.S. Attorney Cynthia Clark from May 4, 1978, to bring about prosecution of Mr. Thompson; however, Thompson died on September 23, 1978. Since he was the principal subject of the prosecution (Graham was to be a witness) the case was dropped. BLM has not been able to confirm the final fate of the missing horses and is continuing to pursue the case.