

1985

Your Public Lands

Winter 1985



Special Wild Horse and Burro Issue



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

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A band of wild horses in the Little Bookcliffs Wild Horse Range near Grand Junction, Colorado. One of three designated Ranges, Little Bookcliffs was dedicated on November 7, 1980, in memory of Velma B. Johnston, better known as "Wild Horse Annie." It was largely through her efforts that the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 was enacted by Congress.

— Photo by Alan Kania

The Wild Horse in North America

By Paul Herndon

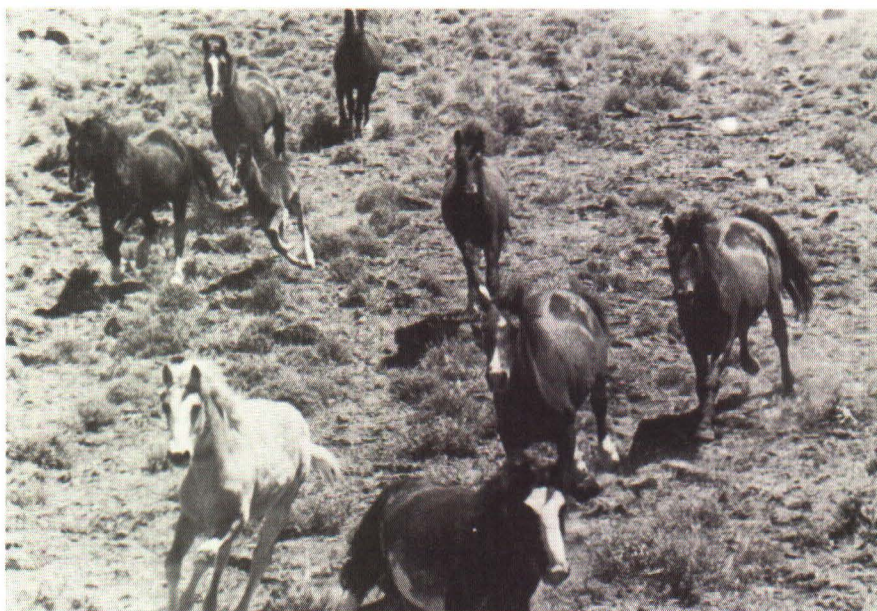
When the English settlements reached the Great Plains, the settlers found Indians fighting and hunting from horseback and herds of wild horses grazing along with the bison, antelope, and deer. So skilled were Indian riders and so large were the wild herds, no one thought to question how or where it all began. Most settlers simply took it for granted that life on the Great Plains had always been like it was at the time of their arrival.

In fact, the situation the settlers found had existed for only a few hundred years and in some places for only a few score years.

When Columbus made his first voyage to the New World, he left typical European livestock on the island of Santo Domingo. Included were six mares, four jackasses and two she-asses. At the time, these were the only members of the genus *Equus* to be found in the New World.

In subsequent voyages, Columbus brought additional horses to Santo Domingo, and by 1500 the island had a fair horse population. The Spanish explorer Hernando Cortez is believed to be the first man to bring horses to the North American mainland when he landed 16 horses in what is now Mexico on March 13, 1519. He was soon joined by his lieutenant, Pedro de Alvarado, who brought an additional 20 horses.

Yet in the context of history and prehistory, the horses arriving in Mexico were completing a com-



A band of wild horses near Susanville, California, gallops across the range much as its ancestors did in the early 1830's when trapper-explorer Zenas Leonard described the California prairies as "swarming with wild horses."

plicated circumnavigation of the world. The species had returned to its point of origin.

Through the work of paleontologists Othniel Charles Marsh, Edward Drinker Cope, and others, we know that the horse originated on the North American continent. Some contend that when the ancestors of the Indian arrived on the Great Plains, they found close ancestors of the modern horse grazing there just as the English settlers had.

But whatever the sequence of events, the horse died out in North America. In *The Wild Horse*

Controversy, Heather Smith Thomas sets the time for horses' final extinction in North America at about 8000 B.C. The species survived only through those ancestors that had migrated across the land bridge then joining Alaska to Siberia to take up residence in Asia.

Man and horse coexisted in the Old World for many millenniums before they got together. From prehistoric drawings found in European caves and other evidence, we know that the first relationship between man and horse was that of predator and

prey. The horse was one of many sources of food available to Stone Age man.

In his book, *Horses*, Dr. George Gaylord Simpson sets the first domestication of the horse at about 2500 B.C. In addition to providing food, domesticated horses were used as pack or draft animals. This was centuries before some venturesome soul mounted a horse and became a rider.

Horseback riding did not come naturally. Early Egyptian drawings show mounted men perched on the rump of their horses—a position awkward to both horse and rider. But once astride his mount, man proved to be an adept pupil. Soon mounted warriors were the scourge of civilization, and a man mounted on horseback could look down on the inferior pedestrian.

As the Spanish colonized Mexico, they found the country and climate ideal for raising horses. Spanish dons established great horse ranches. In the course of time, the line of settlement pushed north and new ranches were established around Santa Fe, in what is now the State of New Mexico.

Indians from the local pueblos were pressed into service as horse

herders, and were soon well-versed in the art of horse culture. Perhaps someone in Mexico had an inkling of the trouble a mounted Indian might create because a law was passed making it punishable by death for an Indian to mount a horse or for his rancher-master to permit him to do so. But Santa Fe was a remote outpost and the law was often ignored by both the herders and their masters.

The Spanish ranchers seem to have also ignored other omens of trouble. In 1680 the Indians revolted and slaughtered or drove out their Spanish masters. As a spoil of victory, the Indians took over the horse herds and, in the time it took for the Spanish to recover and return to punish the rebels, the Pueblo Indians had begun a thriving trade with neighboring tribes. But even then some tribes had already acquired horses from other sources.

Out of New Mexico, the distribution of horses among the Indian tribes spread like concentric rings in an ever-widening circle.

Horses passed from tribe to tribe in the Indian's usual pursuit of trade. The value of the horse in

tribal life was immediately recognized by all Indians who came into contact with them, and a man's wealth was soon counted by the number of horses he owned. A wealthy Indian might boast more than 100 head, while his poor neighbor would have none. The middle class Indian would own a few animals.

In trade negotiations, the practice was to make a gift of the horse to the person you were bargaining with. However, if the recipient did not make a gift of equal value in return, the previous owner would take his horse back. A horse would buy a bold warrior a wife or a rifle.

Trade among Indians usually involved a tribe of hunters trading with an agricultural tribe. Horses, furs and meat were traded for agricultural products or for European trade items.

Prior to the horse, the dog was the only domesticated animal among most tribes of North America. (In the Southwest some tribes had domesticated the turkey.) The pre-horse Indians used dogs for pack animals and food. Plains Indians depended on the migration of buffalo and, when the migration was late, the tribe might well go hungry.

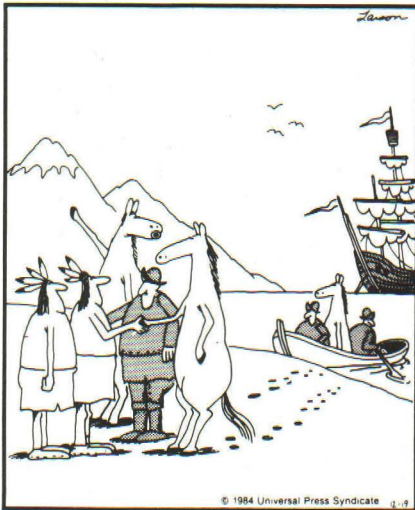
The horse released the Indian from such dependence. The horse dwarfed distances, and made it possible for the tribe to range across vast territories in search of buffalo or in the pursuit of enemies. A good example of the effect the horse had on Indian life is seen in how it affected the Comanche.

The pre-horse Comanches were among the most downtrodden of all the Plains Indians—at the mercy of any war-like tribe that chose to prey upon them. But once the Comanches mastered the art of riding, they became the scourge of the Plains, wreaking vengeance on former enemies with wild abandon.

By the time the settlers reached the Plains, mounted Indian warriors had earned the distinction of



Although not a common sight, some of today's wild horses exhibit the pinto markings generally associated with Indian horses of yesteryear.



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Circa 1500 A.D.: Horses are introduced to America.

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being the best mounted light cavalry in the world. Riding bareback, rider and horse seemed to have been molded together. But such skill did not come all at once or easily.

The earlier account of the Assiniboine is probably typical. At first the horse was used merely as a beast of burden, replacing the dog as a pack animal. Horse and rider were a later development. Some tribal accounts indicate that in the beginning, learning to ride was a traumatic experience. One Indian related how the first riders in his tribe used long sticks as crutches to keep themselves from falling off the horse.

In later years the Blackfoot Indians recalled their first contact with a horse. A hunting party had learned of a dead horse some distance away, and all went to see this marvel. After careful examination the conclusion was that the horse was merely a big dog, and for a time the Blackfoot word for horse was the tribal term for "big dog." From this story it is easy to see why the Indian first considered the horse as merely a pack animal.

The step from distribution of horses among the various tribes to herds of wild horses was a short one. As horses became plentiful,

animals were sure to escape into the wild. There the environment provided for their every need, and their numbers multiplied.

In his journal, trader Anthony Hendry reported seeing his first herd of wild horses in Blackfoot country on September 22, 1754. Lazy Boy, a Blackfoot Indian, accounts for the wild herds as being strays from Indian camps and from animals that went wild after many Blackfoot horse owners died in a smallpox epidemic.

Trader David Thompson tells of losing one of his pack animals to a wild herd east of the Rockies in the early 1800's. According to Thompson, the horse immediately took on the mannerisms of the wild horse—flaring nostrils, mane erect and straight tail.

Although the freedom of Thompson's horse was brief, being recaptured almost immediately, the account makes clear the ease with which the domestic animal returned to the wild and also the relative ease with which wild animals recrossed the barrier to become domesticated.

Some Indian tribes had limited success in getting horses from the wild herds. Animals so captured soon died. Poor luck does not seem to have been typical of many tribes. Indians became experts in using the lasso, and as strays escaped, wild horse herds became a reservoir from which tribes could renew their stock.

The wild horse of today probably has ancestry from many sources. Travelers on the Oregon/California trails abandoned horses once they became too worn out to ride or pull a wagon. In the annals of the Donner party there is a touching account of Virginia Reed's pet horse, Billy, being left behind somewhere in what is now Nevada. How much such animals contributed to wild horse populations is a matter of speculation.

In the mid-1800's wild horse herds were being augmented by strays from the herds of local ranchers, and in the depression years of the 1930's many ranchers

were releasing their horses to fend for themselves on public lands throughout the West.

J. Frank Dobie, well-known authority on the history of the wild horse, estimates that at the peak of the wild horses' reign there were possibly two million animals in North America.

Fray Morfi, a Franciscan missionary, wrote in his diary that mustangs north of the Rio Grande "are so abundant that their trails make the country, utterly uninhabited by people, look as if it were the most populated in the world. All of the grass on the vast ranges has been consumed by them, especially around the waterings."

In 1846, Lt. Ulysses S. Grant described a wild horse herd he and his soldiers encountered on the Texas plains. "As far as our eye could reach, the herd extended. There was no estimating the animals in it."

From early settlers' accounts we learn that for a time, many ranchers considered the wild horse an asset since they were able to replenish their remudas by capturing wild animals. But as the numbers of wild horses increased, wild horses turned from an asset to a nuisance. They were often shot on sight.

Interior Department reports for the 1940's routinely mentioned the number of wild horses that had been sent to the rendering plants, and commercial horse hunters were encouraged to remove animals from the land for the value of the dead carcasses.

The reign of wild horses on the western Plains was over. As man moved westward in increasing numbers, demanding more and more land to support his needs, habitat for the immigrant horse became habitat for the immigrant man.

Paul Herndon is a public affairs specialist in the Bureau of Land Management's Washington, D.C. Office.

Motherhood, Apple Pie, and Large Solid-Hoofed Herbivorous Mammals

By June Wrona

In every society, certain ideas or symbols automatically evoke strong positive emotional reactions. In America, a list of such symbols would undoubtedly include the three in the title above, except that the last item would be narrowed down to the familiar word "horse."

Horse. Its connotation, that certain something suggested by a word or thing, includes our collective memory of the role of the horse in the winning of the West; the extension of the hero's renown to his favorite mount, as in the case of Robert E. Lee and

Traveler; and a substantial body of literature and films that both sentimentalize and anthropomorphize *Equus caballus*. Black Beauty, My Friend Flicka, National Velvet, Buster Brown's Shetland Pony, Roy Rogers' Trigger (preserved through taxidermy), Misty of Chincoteague, the Lone Ranger's Silver, Tonto's Scout, and innumerable other valiant steeds in countless Western movies—all helped either to create or to perpetuate the image of the horse as, if not man's best friend, at least his staunchest and most loyal companion, a creature somehow

qualitatively different from other animals.

If we in America feel a sentimental attachment to these obedient horses of fiction, film, and history, how much stronger is the attraction of the image of the wild free-roaming mustangs of the West! The myth and the reality of the frontier with its wide open spaces and indomitable, untamed spirit—these are powerful elements in the American character. As the Nation became increasingly urban, white collar, and desk-bound, the vision of majestic horse herds still running proud



A wild horse stands sentinel in the Sand Hills north of Reno, Nevada.



Congress has told the Bureau of Land Management to remove more than 17,000 excess wild horses and burros from the public rangelands during this fiscal year.

and free on the open range held ever increasing fascination.

Thus, when Velma Johnston ("Wild Horse Annie") began her crusade against the inhumane capture and slaughter of America's wild horses, its eventual success was assured. A 1959 news account of the volume of mail sent to Members of Congress supporting legislation to protect wild horses noted: "Seldom has an issue touched such a responsive chord in the hearts of their constituents." The reverberations from that chord, including letters from thousands of school children, resulted in the unanimous passage of Public Law 92-195, which required "the protection, management, and control of wild free-roaming horses and burros on public lands" under the jurisdiction of the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

What were the factors that combined to create such enthusiastic support for Public Law 92-195, commonly known as the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act? The ghastliness of the mustangers' excesses, the romantic, legend-enshrouded history of the wild horse in America, and the predisposition of the American people to sympathize with horses provided the necessary base for the enactment of legislation. What

legislator could oppose protection for "the living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West"? Opponents of the legislation became "bad guys," regardless of the basis for their opposition. Mustang or thoughtful questioner of the long-range implications of the Act, both found themselves on the wrong side of a highly emotional issue.

Indeed, what basis could there have been for opposition to an Act based on such humane and conservationist considerations? Two controversies arose from the very first sentence of the Act. The declaration that these animals are "symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West" was challenged by some Westerners who characterized many of the free-roaming horses in less flattering terms, such as "broomtails, scrubs, and jugheads."

The most widespread popular view of the mustangs' origin stresses an ancestry stretching back to the horses brought to this continent by conquistadors. However, it is probable that at most only a small fraction of today's wild horses are direct descendants of those animals. In 1982, the National Academy of Sciences' Final Report on Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros could only observe that: "Contemporary North American

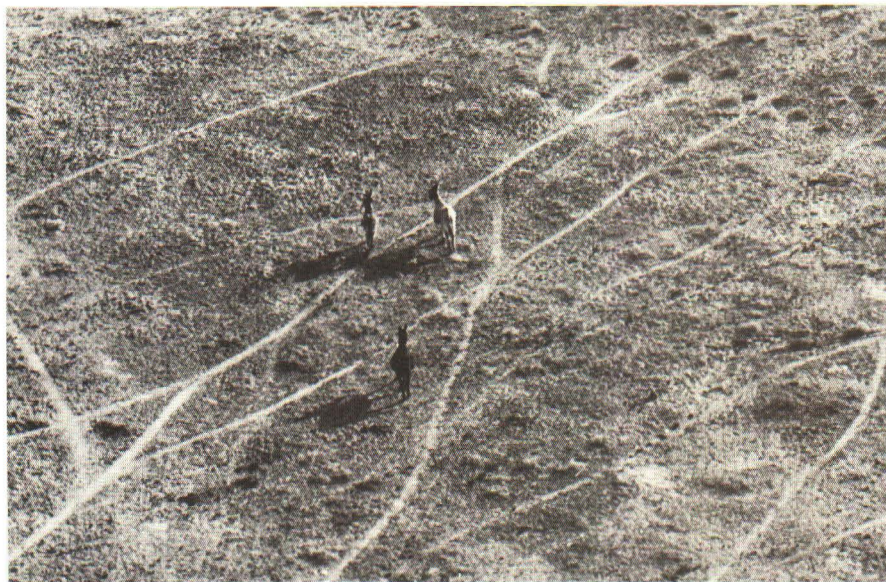
wild horses are variously claimed, depending on the claimant and the locale, to be the wild-mustang descendants of domestic horses introduced by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, or of miscellaneous cavalry mounts, work horses, and saddle animals escaped or abandoned more recently."

Another point of dispute involved the words "fast disappearing." The sponsors of protective legislation found the harvesting of wild horses not only an inhumane practice but one that threatened these free-roaming animals with extinction. Other observers of the Western scene disagreed. They argued that, in spite of acknowledged excesses, mustangers had for years operated in such a manner as to maintain herds of wild horses, if only for their own continuing economic gain.

Furthermore, wide disagreement existed as to just how many mustangs roamed the range. A canvass of field-office records conducted shortly after the passage of the Act estimated that 17,000 wild horses and burros populated the public lands, but that figure is generally conceded to be only an approximation, and a low one, at that. The 1982 National Academy of Sciences report stated, "The 17,000 figure is undoubtedly low to an unknown, but perhaps substantial, degree."

Whatever the number in 1971, once the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act was in place, the threat of extinction was effectively removed and the phrase "fast disappearing" became an anachronism. Wild horses have few predators, which pose at most an occasional threat, mainly to new foals. With Federal protection from harassment and slaughter by man, wild horse numbers climbed steadily, with no end or limit in sight.

But the law describes them as "fast disappearing," and humane and horse protection organizations have generally opposed attempts



Paths used repeatedly by burros cause erosion and irreparable damage to fragile public lands.

to modify the Act, although it has been amended twice. One amendment, passed in 1976, allowed the Federal Government to use helicopters in managing wild horses and burros. Another, in 1978, required a research program and, in recognition of the existence of excess animals as a growing problem, established the order and priority for their disposition.

The principal means of disposing of excess animals, adoption, had been provided for in the 1971 Act, but the eventual scope of the program could not have been anticipated at that time. Lawmakers concerned with saving wild horses from extinction presumably did not envision 50,000 adoptions when they declared that, "Where an area is found to be overpopulated, the Secretary . . . may cause additional excess wild free-roaming horses and burros to be captured and removed for private maintenance under humane conditions and care."

Nor could they have foreseen the magnitude of the problem of uncontrolled population growth and its emotional overtones when

they directed that, "The Secretary may order wild free-roaming horses or burros to be destroyed in the most humane manner possible when he deems such action to be an act of mercy or when in his judgment such action is necessary to preserve and maintain the habitat in a suitable condition for continued use."

The provision for private maintenance was to become as popular with the general public as the provision for destruction was distasteful. From casual beginnings in Montana, where 23 horses were placed in private care in 1973, the adoption process evolved into a nationwide Adopt-A-Horse Program.

Experience indicates that, under current procedures, the maximum number of wild horse and burro adoptions in any one year is between 9,000 and 10,000 animals. Roughly 2,500 excess horses were being maintained in BLM corrals at the start of FY 1985 at a daily cost of nearly \$2 per horse; 17,000 animals must be removed from the range this year; 9,500 adoptions are projected for FY 1985; and the annual rate of

population increase is estimated to be 16 percent. The mathematical implications are clear: the disposition of excess horses and burros remains a problem to be resolved.

Consider this true anecdote: The setting is a high school history classroom. An ancient black and white image is projected on a standing screen. A World War II cavalry charge of nearly half a century ago streams across the screen. Men and mounts fall, wounded and dying, eliciting murmurs of concern . . . for the "poor horses."

Somehow a happy medium must be found. Between the cruel callousness of the mustanger with his load of bloody horses and the extraordinarily selective sympathy of the students watching the newsreel, there exists a humane, but reasonable middle ground. In this elusive meeting area, individual wild horses would continue to be protected from "capture, branding, harassment, or death," and herds and their characteristics of wild free-roaming behavior would continue to be preserved and managed on the public lands. Beyond these two givens, the disposition of individual excess animals would be viewed in a perspective no more or less humane than that in which we view the disposition of other excess animals, both wild and domestic.

Wild horses and burros are indeed "living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West," but the individual excess wild horse or burro is merely another large solid-hoofed herbivorous mammal. As with any other animal subject to man's control, its fate—whether private maintenance under adoption, destruction, or some other alternative—ought to be rationally determined and humanely accomplished.

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Wild Horses of the Pryor Mountains

By Barbara Maxfield



Some Pryor Mountain wild horses exhibit "zebra stripes" on their legs, dorsal stripes, or even a missing sixth vertebra, all linking the animals to their distant past.

In the midst of a barren landscape, on top of a steep and rocky slope, stands a symbol of both America's past and future—a herd of Pryor Mountain wild horses. Center of a nationwide controversy in the 1960's, these animals today illustrate how the public and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) work together to preserve and protect a healthy wild horse herd in numbers compatible with its habitat in the unique Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range.

The history of the horse in the Pryor Mountain area along the

Montana-Wyoming border stretches back about 50 million years to the Eocene era. Fossilized bones of *eohippus* (scientific name, *Hyracotherium*), a small, four-toed creature recognized as the oldest ancestor of today's horse, have been found in the Bighorn Basin of Wyoming, a short distance from the wild horse range. The evolution of *eohippus* into the predecessors of *Equus caballus*, today's horse, can be traced only in the area presently known as the western United States. However, for reasons still unknown to modern man, the native American

horse disappeared some time during the Pleistocene Epoch.

The final evolution of the horse into *Equus caballus* took place in Asia, but the horse returned to North America around 600,000 B.C., only to disappear again about 8,000 B.C. When the horse reappeared in the Pryor Mountains is uncertain, but many experts think they could have arrived in the 1700's or early 1800's. The earliest recorded history is a picture of a 1910 horse roundup.

Horses have played an important role in the lives of the nearby Crow Indians, explorers, settlers, military, and ranchers in Montana and Wyoming for the past 200 years. Many people believe today's Pryor Mountain wild horses are descendants of animals that escaped from or were turned loose by their owners during this time period. However, some of the wild horses share a common trait with the original Spanish Barb horses—a missing sixth vertebra or fused fifth and sixth vertebrae—lending credence to the claim the animals are direct descendants of horses brought to America by the Spanish conquistadores.

In 1964, BLM estimated approximately 200 wild horses roamed the Pryor Mountains. Range conditions were deteriorating as the land's fragile resources were overused. Partial or total removal of the wild horses was suggested to stabilize the environment.

In 1968, a small group of Lovell, Wyoming, citizens banded together to seek protection for the herd. When their story was publicized by nationwide news media, public support for preserv-

ing the wild horses was voiced across America. Then Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall responded by designating the area as the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range on September 9, 1968, the first of its kind in the Nation.

The original wild horse range designation included approximately 33,600 acres. Since the actual herd area extended beyond these boundaries, additional acres have been made available by the BLM, Forest Service, National Park Service, and State of Montana to make 46,811 acres available for wild horses. There are three wild horse herd areas within the Pryor Range, and each is generally inhabited by specific bands of wild horses.

Management of the horse range has been an important task for BLM. Maintaining a proper balance between the number of wild horses and available habitat is not easy because of geographical characteristics of the area, unstable soil conditions, sparse vegetation and rainfall, and extreme weather conditions. The elevation ranges from 3,900 feet to 8,000 feet, with deep steep-walled canyons, isolated grassy plateaus, and foothill slopes. Vegetation within much of the horse range is sparse, and the soils are young, fragile, low in productivity, and susceptible to erosion. Precipitation in the area varies; about 5 inches fall annually in the lower elevations, while the upper elevations receive about 20 inches.

As on most public lands, a wide variety of resources are managed by BLM in an intricate balance. Thirty-seven prehistoric sites have been recorded in the Pryor Mountains in cultural inventories. Included are lithic scatters, stone rings, chert quarries, rock art, and rock shelters, with some material dating back approximately 6,000 to 9,000 years.

Despite its difficult access, the range receives some use from the general public. Recreation activities within the horse range in-

clude hunting, fishing, camping, spelunking, sightseeing, picnicking, and viewing the wild horses. Although at one time there was support for a scenic loop road through the wild horse range to improve public access, the plan was abandoned because of concern over the effect it would have on the horses. Primitive roads lead to all herd areas. Most of the use is by local residents who are familiar with the area and have some knowledge of the roads.

in residence. Research is underway to study the effects of possible reintroduction of additional bighorn sheep. Another reintroduction being considered would bring the peregrine falcon back to several areas in the Pryor Mountains.

In accordance with the requirements of Federal law, wild horse management on the Pryors has been at the minimal feasible level to maintain the wild free-roaming nature of the animals. To protect



In September 1968, Interior Secretary Stewart Udall designated an area in the Pryor Mountains as America's first wild horse range. Two more ranges have since been designated, one in Nevada and another in Colorado.

Within the boundaries of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range are three wilderness study areas. BLM has recommended that all of one area and portions of the other two (a total of 22,907 acres) be forwarded to Congress as suitable for wilderness designation.

Sharing the habitat with the wild horses is a variety of wildlife, including big game species such as mule deer, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, elk, and black bear. The bighorn sheep are a "reintroduced species," with a small band of 16 animals presently

the animals and their environment, the range is contained either by natural barriers or fencing. Two water catchments have been developed, and BLM is considering construction of 5 new catchments to improve the grazing distribution of horse bands.

The Pryor Mountain wild horse typically is a small, compact animal of a light or saddle horse type. Adult animals are usually 14 to 15 hands and weigh approximately 1,000 pounds. Their rocky habitat keeps their hooves well-trimmed, with thick walls and

soles. Colors present include red and blue roans, grulla, buckskin, sorrel, black, bay, and brown. No paint, appaloosa, or palomino horses are present.

According to the herd management area plan for the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, which was published in June 1984 and guides today's management of the area, BLM's primary management objective for the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range is to maintain a healthy, viable herd

rate of 20 percent during recent years, and with few predators present, the Pryor Mountain wild horse population generally increases each year. When the horse population is found to exceed the carrying capacity of the range, excess animals are captured and removed.

The extremely rough terrain of the Pryor Mountains and the lack of access make the use of helicopters and large trucks in the gathering process impractical. The

are marked with a lip tattoo for identification purposes and then released on the range. If the population of one herd area has dropped below its appropriate level, excess animals from another Pryor Mountain herd area may be relocated to that area. All other horses removed from the range (about 25 to 35 percent of those captured) are offered for adoption through BLM's Adopt-A-Horse Program.

Throughout the period of developing management plans for the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, BLM sought and encouraged public participation in the development of management priorities. Careful attention has been and will continue to be given to expressions of concern from a wide range of groups and individuals interested in the protection and continuation of the wild horses and the range itself.

Community support for the wild horses and the range is strong. The local area has adopted the wild horse range as a key part of their identity, even naming their annual week-long celebration "Mustang Days." The community recognizes the need for removing excess animals to protect both the animals and their habitat, and several local residents have adopted and gentled excess Pryor Mountain horses.

With the support of BLM and the local community behind them, the future of the wild horses and their home on the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range looks bright. In the midst of an often harsh environment, the small, colorful, and well-adapted animals serve as a prime example of the "living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West" that Congress and the American people sought to protect in the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971.

Barbara Maxfield is a public affairs specialist in the Bureau of Land Management's Washington, DC Office.



Sparse vegetation in some Pryor Mountain herd areas makes finding a meal a challenge for the wild horses.

that displays the characteristics typical of the Pryor Mountain wild horses. Balancing herd populations with the forage available is a key element in attaining improvement of range condition, herd health and viability, wildlife habitat, and watershed condition.

At this time, the Pryor Mountain wild horse population is being managed at a level of 120 animals. Over the next 8 years, BLM will monitor range and animal conditions to see if this number should be modified.

With an average annual foaling

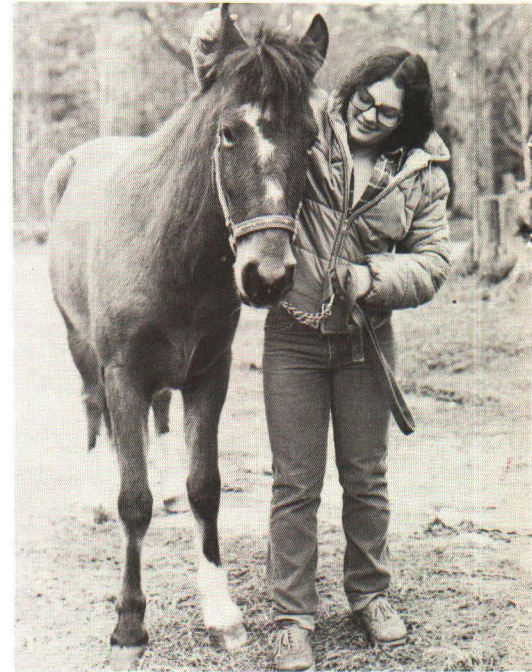
Old Wild West's cowboy, horse, and lariat reign supreme in a Pryor Mountain roundup. The capture of the wild horses in one of the eight traps is only the beginning—from there the cowboys must bring the animals to the main corrals on the end of a rope for sorting, medical treatment, and lip tattooing.

Captured horses are evaluated with regard to health, age, sex, color, and conformation. Those horses with desirable characteristics for perpetuation of the typical Pryor Mountain wild horse

Why in the World Adopt a Wild Horse



*As a 4-H project. Kristine Kipping,
Fauquier County, Virginia.*



*For recreational riding.
Pam Gauthier of Merrimack,
New Hampshire.*



*For rodeos and
parades. Corky
McKinney of
Yuma, Arizona.*



*As a saddle horse.
Don Bair, Denver,
Colorado.*



*For a show horse.
Patti Richards of Provo, Utah.*

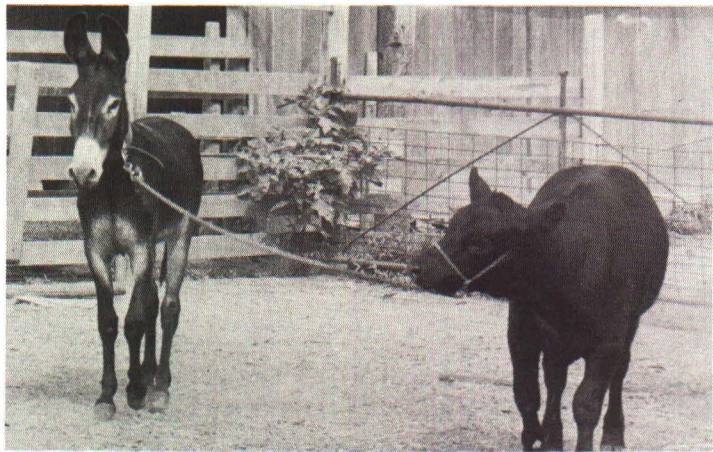
World Would Anyone Horse or Burro?



*As a Christmas present.
Sieglinda Woolley of
Arvada, Colorado.*



*As a pet.
Mary Marschat of Canaan,
Connecticut.*



*To train show animals.
Clifford Rowlett, Jr., Medina,
Tennessee.*



*For farm animals.
Henry Newborn of Sacramento,
California.*



*For a prize-winning show horse.
Joe Burton of Jacksonville, Texas.*

Spider: From Wild Horse to Cow Horse

By D. Scott Brayton

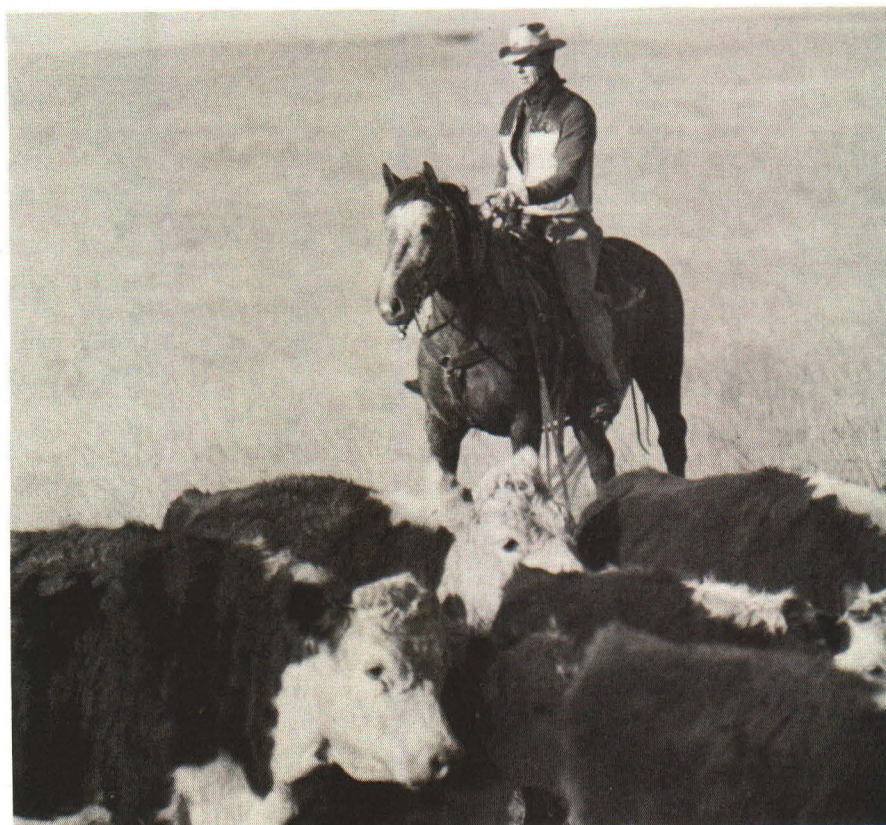
Apprehension was evident on Bill Francis' face this crisp October morning. It was the beginning of fall roundup, and there were 400 head of cattle to move off the range and into corrals for weaning. Today, however, Bill's chief concern was how his new horse, Spider, would behave on his first roundup. Would he remain calm in the midst of all the bawling calves as they were trail- ed 10 miles to the ranch corrals?

Spider is no ordinary horse. A year earlier he had been running wild across Wyoming's open rangelands. Captured in a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) roundup designed to remove excess wild horses from public lands, Spider was adopted by Bill and his wife, Chris, through BLM's Adopt-A-Horse Program.

Bill and Chris operate the South Camp Land Company near Cheyenne, Wyoming, which was once part of the historic Wyoming Hereford Ranch established in 1883. They share a love of the Old West and its rich heritage. What would be most fitting to bring a vestige of the Old West into their lives and onto a working cattle ranch: A wild horse, of course!

Once their application to adopt a wild horse was approved, an appointment was made to pick up their horse at the nearest BLM adoption center. This meant a 6-hour drive to Rock Springs at the other end of the State. However, Bill and Chris were so eager to get their new horse, the long drive was taken in stride.

When they arrived at the Rock Springs wild horse adoption



Wyoming Rancher Bill Francis works cattle with his once wild horse.

center, they were shown several large corrals of nervous, restless wild horses. Each horse could be identified by a number painted on its back. All Bill and Chris had to do was pick a horse and BLM wranglers would cut it from the herd for a closer inspection.

Bill wanted a durable cow pony to replace some of his older stock. His experienced eye spotted a spunky blue roan about three years old. "That's the one," he said to the wranglers. A closer look confirmed Bill's decision, and soon Spider was loaded into Bill's

stock trailer and headed for his new home.

Running a large ranch is no easy chore, especially when there're only two of you. The day starts early and ends after sundown. Bill and Chris could only devote a couple of hours a day training Spider and getting him accustomed to his new surroundings.

Since Spider was Bill's horse, they agreed that Bill would handle the training, with support from Chris. Bill wanted Spider to respond out of trust and not fear;

this would be emphasized in the training methods used. It would require plenty of patience, and hopefully, he would be ready for next fall's roundup.

Spider was put in a corral so he could get used to being confined and lose some of his wildness through association with tame horses. "In being confined, Spider knew two things," Bill explained. "He would try to escape, and when he couldn't do that, he'd try to fight me. I think he jumped every fence we had. With a wild horse your fences should be at least 6 to 7-feet high. Once Spider realized he couldn't get away or hurt me, he began to settle down and trust me a little more."

The next step in Spider's education was to wear a halter trailing 15 feet of soft rope. The rope was tied around his neck and run through the halter. Although Bill knows it is dangerous to leave a halter that might catch on something on any loose horse, he felt the risk was necessary in Spider's case.

"I used a 3/4-inch nylon rope," Bill explained. "Having Spider trail a rope around the corral all day got him used to the feel of a rope on his body and around his feet. When it hung up or he stepped on it, he realized he had to stop instead of bolting away. The long rope also made it easier to catch him."

Bill began working with Spider in a small corral. "I always entered the corral facing him," Bill said. "It showed I wasn't going to hurt him and helped build trust. I'd take the long rope and teach him to be led and to turn in the direction that I pulled on the rope."

Spider proved to be a fast learner and was soon ready to be introduced to a saddle. Bill tied him into a corral corner to prevent him from rearing and to keep from being kicked. "I couldn't afford to get hurt because of all the work I had to do on the ranch," Bill said. "I sacked Spider out to get him accustomed to the feel of

something on his back. I put the saddle on easy, with the right stirrup over the saddle horn to keep it from whacking him on the off side and scaring him."

"I talked softly as I did this and petted Spider to reassure him that I wasn't going to hurt him. I used a single-rig saddle because it doesn't have a flank cinch. Flanks are a sensitive area on a horse and a flank cinch can cause them to be more nervous."

After Spider was saddled, Bill would let him stand for a few hours to become familiar with the pressure on his back. Then Bill added another factor—himself.

Slowly, while talking and making sure Spider could see what he was doing, Bill eased himself into the saddle. Bill would drag his foot across Spider's rump while mounting and dismounting so Spider could get used to the pressure and more weight. Spider didn't bat an eye.

The next test came when Spider was untied from the corral corner and Chris, on horseback, led him around the corral with Bill on his back. Chris would dally the halter rope close to her saddle, leaving about two feet of slack. Her gentle horse had a calming effect on Spider and kept him from rearing.

Spider caught on quickly and the bond of trust between horse and rider grew stronger. This led to a big moment for Spider and Bill—their first ride without Chris or being snubbed to a corral corner. "I got bucked off a few times," Bill admitted, "but I think Spider did it because he was unfamiliar with the situation and wanted to get rid of what was on his back. I'm sure it wasn't because he didn't like me. Every time he bucked me off, he'd stand still and let me catch him and mount again. Pretty soon I could walk out in the pasture and he'd come right up to me.

"I taught him to turn by using a breaking hackamore and not a bit. A hackamore controls the head without hurting the horse's mouth, like a bridle and bit does. The

secret to teaching a horse to turn is to try and not put pressure on the reins until you want him to respond. If the horse still won't turn, reach down and pull his head in the direction you want him to turn. After I got Spider used to a breaking hackamore I changed to a snaffle bit. He didn't mind at all."

By now Spider had become a one-man horse. He trusted Bill and would follow him around like a large puppy.

Bill's final lesson before taking Spider on the fall roundup was to familiarize him with Bill swinging a rope from the saddle. "I carried a small coil and would swing it out a little at a time," explained Bill. "I always made sure Spider could see what I was doing and didn't make any sudden moves to catch him off guard."

Spider was finally ready for his debut as a Wyoming cow pony and his first cattle drive. "I didn't know what was going to happen," Bill recalls. "I was prepared for anything, but Spider behaved really well. He responded to me, and the noise and commotion didn't bother him one bit."

Was the time and effort worth it? "You bet!" exclaims Bill. "Spider's going to be my number one horse." Bill and Chris are so impressed with how well Spider responded to their gentle brand of training that they eventually hope to adopt another wild horse that matches Spider. Chris hopes to drive the matched pair in Cheyenne's annual Frontier Days parades, and the young cow pony could also help out on the ranch. As for Spider, he's found other duties beside being a working cow pony. Bill uses him to help break other horses, and he can even pull a wagon. He has truly found a comfortable new home on the range.

D. Scott Brayton is a public affairs specialist in the Bureau of Land Management's Salt Lake, Utah, District Office.

Wild Horses and Burros Have Their Days

By Terry Lewis

Through a combination county fair, reunion, horse show, and camporee, held three times during the past two years, more than 20 million Americans and countless people from distant lands such as Australia, Great Britain, Belgium and Germany became acquainted with one of the most unusual wild animal management programs in the world, the Bureau of Land Management's Adopt-A-Wild Horse and Burro Program.

This unique program, established to help protect and control the wild horses and burros on public rangelands in the West, provides an unusual way to manage their increasing populations. Excess animals are removed from the ranges and placed in the care of private individuals who will provide good homes; that is, "adopt" them.

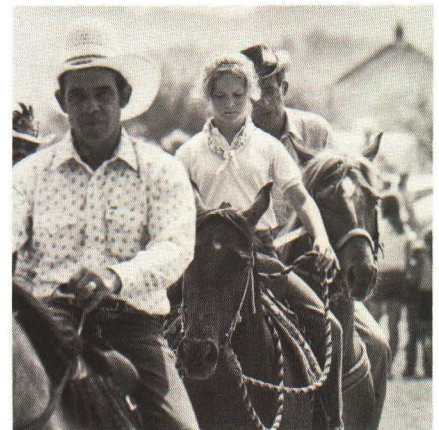
To make these excess animals readily available to caring people, BLM maintains 10 wild horse and burro adoption centers open year-round, including two in the East. The two, located in Cross Plains, Tennessee, and Lewisberry, Pennsylvania, are operated respectively under contract by Randall and Paula Carr and Frank and Doris Goodlander. To bring animals even closer to potential adoptors in the 31 eastern States, the Bureau's Eastern States Office in Alexandria, Virginia, operates about eight temporary adoption centers each year.

Striving to find new ways to let people know that wild horses and

burros still roam the public rangelands in the West and to stimulate greater demand for animals available for adoption, BLM, the Goodlanders and the Carrs resorted to something old and traditional, but with a new flair. Since both centers are in rural farm areas, they tried the time-honored county fair approach, and the Wild Horse and Burro Days concept was born.

Three Wild Horse and Burro Days celebrations at the eastern adoption centers have included such diverse sideline entertainment as the Nation's only octogenarian steam-calliope player, professional actors in old-West "shoot-'em up" skits, dulcimer and mouth-bow music, square dancing, live country bands, and even a fireworks display to light up the evening sky. Craft people have offered for sale such diverse handiwork as horse paintings, quilted pillows, Indian jewelry, and woodcarvings; and the aroma from turtle soup, Pennsylvania Dutch funnel cakes and barbecued beef, pork and lamb has tempted even the most diet-conscious spectators.

More importantly, the focus of attention during the weekend events is on the wild horses and burros themselves, and on the gentling and training demonstrations in the showings. Adoptors from as far away as 1,500 miles have voluntarily returned with their trained wild horses and burros and have shown everything from prize-winning plow horses to



Tennessee adoption center contractor Randall Carr; Leslee Alexander, daughter of Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander; and William Ables, wild horse adopter from Ripley, Tennessee, lead the parade opening Wild Horse and Burro Days in July 1984.

an albino baby burro.

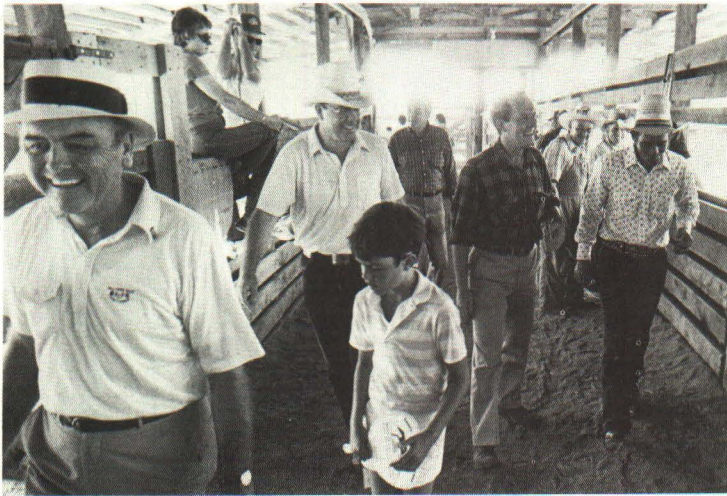
Spectators are treated to outstanding demonstrations on western and English riding, show-jumping, wagon and cart pulling, reining and cutting, all provided by performing animals that were at one time wild and rarely near humans. Now they perform in front of thousands of people. Spectators have a graphic answer to their often asked question, "Can wild horses and burros ever be trained?"

A tobacco barn and hay barn serve as impromptu theaters, with hourly showings of the Bureau's prize-winning wild horse and

burro movie, "Dapples and Grays, Pintos and Bays," usually playing to standing-room-only crowds. Veterinarians with hours of hands-on experience with wild horses and burros provide information on the proper health care for adopted animals, while professional horse trainers demonstrate gentling

techniques with animals never before handled. Hundreds of campers in vans, tents, and bedrolls enjoy the evening guitar picking and banjo strumming beside a crackling fire under the stars. These hours of relaxation offer the diverse participants an ideal time to discuss

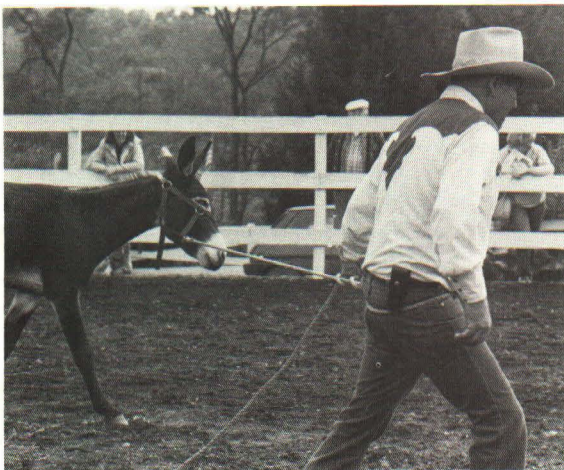
the one common interest they all share, the adopted wild horse and burro. A 70-year-old retired steelworker from New York swaps stories about his cart-pulling burros with a Louisiana rice farmer who is proud of his brood mare. Wallet pictures and photo albums showing the improved conditions



Charles Howell, Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Conservation; Curtis Jones, BLM Eastern States Director; Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander, and contractor Randall Carr tour the Tennessee adoption center.



Many adopters return for Wild Horse and Burro Days to demonstrate the versatility of their horses and burros.



Training demonstrations are always popular during Wild Horse and Burro Days. Trainer Tom White shows how to halter-break a wild burro at Lewisberry, Pennsylvania.

A county fair atmosphere prevails at Wild Horse and Burro Days.



Prospective adopters look over the wild horses available for adoption during Tennessee Wild Horse and Burro Days.



Visiting children delight in riding tamed wild horses and burros.

of animals after adoption circulate from campfire to campfire, almost like photos of grandchildren at a family reunion.

The success of Wild Horse and Burro Days is based on the spirit of cooperation and volunteer assistance provided by a wide range of people. Governors have proclaimed Wild Horse and Burro Days in Pennsylvania and Tennessee with all attendant pomp and ceremony. State and county tourism departments have helped to publicize the events with feature stories, posters, and distribution of literature through highway information centers and chambers of commerce.

The Pennsylvania State Department of Education helped sponsor a statewide poster contest for elementary students, with the results nearly wallpapering the corrals at the Pennsylvania adoption center. The Pennsylvania and Tennessee State Departments of Agriculture, county commissioners, and county agents have

donated invaluable support by inviting the public through their newsletters and providing staff workers and equipment such as film projectors and public address systems. Agricultural organizations such as the Cattlemen's Association, Farmers' Union, and Farm Bureau publicized the event and arranged for appearances by their queens, promoting farm products and providing tempting samples.

Youth organizations such as the Boy Scouts, 4-H, and VisionQuest have shown prize-winning adopted horses and helped with parking and crowd control. A prime example of youth involvement is the Echoing Hoofbeats 4-H Club that literally adopted the Pennsylvania adoption center. The 4-H club now meets at the center, where members proudly compete with their adopted horses in a large showing they built with materials and equipment donated by local businessmen. The Echoing Hoofbeats received national attention when they adopted Sir

Echo, the 50,000th animal adopted through the Bureau program.

The private sector has also been very supportive of Wild Horse and Burro Days. Marquees, tents, tables, chairs, horse trailers, feed, road signs, even breakfast sausages and bread have been donated by businesses for the festivities. Bob Evans Farms, a sausage and restaurant firm that prides itself on promoting American Heritage, demonstrated a prized Spanish Barb (the original mustang). This corporate involvement has led to their agreement to sponsor an adoption event at their headquarters in Rio Grande, Ohio.

Of course, there could be no Wild Horse and Burro Days without the adoption centers' contractors, who voluntarily work hundreds of hours in preparation for the events and make the public feel at home when they are welcomed at the centers. But the most important volunteer assistance comes from the hundreds of adopters who assist wherever and whenever they can.

Proud adopters have traveled from 25 States to show their horses and burros in the flesh or with pictures. They have posted Wild Horse and Burro Days announcements in their businesses, post offices, and schools; traveled hundreds of miles to tell about their adopted animals to the media; and told the Adopt-A-Horse and Burro story to riding clubs, civic organizations, and thousands of people at county and State fairs from New York to Arkansas.

Call Wild Horse and Burro Days a reunion, county fair, horse show or just good times, it has helped the Bureau carry out one of the most unique wild animal management programs in the world.

Terry Lewis is a public affairs specialist with the Bureau of Land Management's Eastern States Office in Alexandria, Virginia.

Roundup at Sand Springs

By Teresa Gibson

The whirl of a hovering helicopter, the creaking sound of metal panels being rearranged, and a multitude of colored horses closing in on the trap are just a few of the sights and sounds that dominate the scene of a wild horse roundup.

Anticipation and tension build as the helicopter whirl becomes louder and louder as it nears the horse trap in the Sand Springs Herd Management Area in the extreme southeastern corner of Oregon.

About 5 miles off in the distance, the helicopter pilot slowly

maneuvers in large lazy circles, like a bird of prey, above a small band of horses yet to be seen from the trap site. The pilot calls in on the radio announcing that he has seven horses in this group, and he expects to be in within the hour.

Initially the group of horses run from the helicopter at a strong gallop, uncertain of the flying machine. But with time, the animals become used to its presence and are slowly edged into the desired direction with gentle coaxing from the man above.

The pilot tries to keep the herd

together and is careful not to push the horses too fast because they have a long way to go. He considers the terrain, weather conditions, and distance to be traveled to make sure the smaller colts are able to keep up with the rest of the herd.

Under the pilot's guidance, within minutes the horses are generally running single file behind the lead mare or stud toward the trap. They eventually slow down to a trot as they become less intimidated by the helicopter. Along the way, one of the horses reaches down to take an occasional bite of snow as a source of water.

From this point on, the horses seem to be moving more at their own pace. At times, it looks as if the horses purposely slow down to resist the helicopter.

Meanwhile at the trap, the crew is patiently waiting for the small band of horses to arrive. Wranglers are busy reorganizing the trap panels for better loading, while outside the trap, visitors rest on rock outcroppings and discuss what kind of photography angle they would like to get of the horses as they arrive.

An hour and a half has passed since the pilot picked up the horses, and the animals are now nearing the trap. Everyone takes their position, some hide behind rocks, and others behind sagebrush blinds.

The area is fairly open, with no trees or tall bushes to hide behind and only small hills and mounds of rock outcropping scattered across the generally flat rangeland. The trap, somewhat obscured by the location, is camouflaged by



The foal running in front of the band demonstrates the easy pace set by the helicopter pilot and wranglers during capture operations. If herded too rapidly, foals tire and lag behind the rest of the band.

sagebrush bunches laced between the visible panels.

The whirl of the helicopter blades increases in volume. The approaching horses become larger in size and shape as they gradually come into view.

Within about half of a mile from the trap, the pilot—a modern-day aerial cowboy—steers his quarry toward the trap opening. From behind a nearby rock mound, wranglers release two “traitor horses” to lead the unsuspecting wild herd into the trap. These horses are useful for capturing wild horses. They serve as decoys to their to-be-domesticated counterparts and are trained to run directly to the trap.

As the horses pass into the mouth of the trap, a wrangler on horseback pulls a long canvas gate across to close the opening. Three others come out of hiding to support the cloth canvas in the middle and shoo at the horses to prevent them from jumping over the exit.

Meanwhile the helicopter steadily maintains position over the canvas area about 100 feet above the ground, reinforcing it so the horses dare not try to come back out.

On this second day of the roundup, there is not much slack time. All hands are busy loading horses into the trucks between each group of incoming horses. A total of 74 horses were rounded up on this very busy day.

Patience and persistence are the keys to loading wild horses enclosed for the first time in a confined area. Two wranglers on either side of the elongated runway of the loading chute separate the horses into smaller groups and eventually onto the loading ramp. On occasion, a few of the horses get turned around and find themselves backing up into the truck, adding a little light-heartedness to the group of onlookers.

Somehow, the last 10 or 11 horses are herded into the truck and the final gate is closed. The

engine starts up for the two-hour trip to the wild horse corrals in Burns, Oregon. There the horses will receive medical treatment, vaccinations, blood tests, and permanent identification numbers, and eventually will be transported to an adoption center or to holding facilities.

But this is only the second half of the roundup day.

The six wranglers started the day while the moon and the bright eastern Oregon stars were still out. For about 10 days straight on each roundup, the Government cowboys are up by 6 o'clock in the morning, swig down coffee and eat a fast breakfast, and warm up their rigs or pickups by 6:30 a.m.

As the rising sun breaks over the horizon, the rigs pull out onto the highway on their way to the trap. One of the trucks hauls the horse trailer with two saddle horses and two “traitor horses” inside. A full day's work has just begun for the crew and those four horses, and they will return to the horse camp in 10 to 12 hours. They will shut down only for lunch.

Even before the roundup begins, much thought and work goes into the development of management and gathering plans plus the construction of a horse trap in the open range.

Herd management plans are developed and occasionally updated to determine the number of wild horses allowable on the range. In these herd management areas, the wild horses are in competition for forage and water with wildlife and livestock in the area.

Inventories are conducted at least every other year and sometimes annually to determine the number of horses presently on the range. With wild horse populations in Oregon multiplying at about 20 percent or more per year, each herd is reduced every four to five years depending upon available funds and several other factors.

Several weeks and sometimes months before a roundup, BLM

employees will fly over the herd management area to inventory the horses and to determine the best possible location for a trap site.

When looking for a good trap location, several things are taken into consideration. First, an area with good road access is preferred. Next, the BLM employees find a place that the horses regularly travel. Finally, the location should have small hills and other natural terrain, which would restrict the horses' view once they are within the confines of the trap.

Once a location is selected and all regulations and clearances are met, the actual trap is constructed. During construction—which takes about two days—60 to 150 metal panels are used to build the necessary structure. Some holes will be dug to position the corner braces so the trap will be sturdy enough to hold the weight of horses against the panels. The trap is carefully constructed so as not to injure the horses with obtrusive edges or sharp points. For additional safety, the area is also cleared of any large rocks.

Roundups like these are perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of the wild horse and burro program, but they are not without complications and risks. The gathering crew must be extremely careful around wild horses. Roundup plans may change daily, and the crew's activities heavily depend upon weather conditions.

Throughout the Western States where roundups—like this one in Oregon—are taking place, each gathering will differ somewhat in techniques and procedures. However, all have a common goal of reducing the numbers of wild horses and burros on the public rangelands to more manageable levels.

Teresa Gibson is a public affairs specialist in the Bureau of Land Management's Burns, Oregon District Office.

Letters, We Get Letters

Don't misunderstand us—we love to get letters. We like to hear what's on your mind, and we thoroughly enjoy the painstaking drawings forwarded to us by budding young artists.

But since so many of your letters express the same concerns, we'd like to take this opportunity to answer some common questions about wild horse and burro management. If your questions aren't addressed here, please feel free to write to us at:

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Division of Wild Horses and Burros
(250)
Premier Building, Room 909
Washington, D. C. 20240

Why is BLM allowing wild horses and burros to be slaughtered for pet food?

One of our most frequently asked questions, we answer this with an emphatic **WE'RE NOT!!!** Wild free-roaming horses and burros have been protected from such a fate since Public Law 92-195 was enacted on December 15, 1971. Before that time, mustangers frequently sold the animals they rounded up with trucks and airplanes to canneries as a source of pet food. The law, commonly referred to as the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, was a direct response to the inhumane treatment the wild horses and burros often were subjected to during roundup and transportation to the slaughterhouses.

The law does not allow excess wild horses and burros to be sold at auction or in any other manner. Excess wild horses and burros must be removed and disposed of

in the following order and priority: First, old, sick, or lame animals are to be humanely destroyed. Second, healthy animals are to be placed in private maintenance through the Adopt-A-Horse (or Burro) Program as long as there are qualified individuals wishing to adopt them. Third, remaining excess animals for which there is no adoption demand are to be destroyed in the most humane and cost efficient manner possible.

A moratorium on the destruction of healthy excess animals has been in effect since 1982. BLM has no desire to destroy healthy animals, nor does public sentiment favor such action. The only wild horses and burros being destroyed by BLM are those that are so old, sick, or lame that they have little chance of recovery. These animals are destroyed as a humane measure and generally constitute less than 5 percent of the animals captured. None of the animals are processed into pet food.

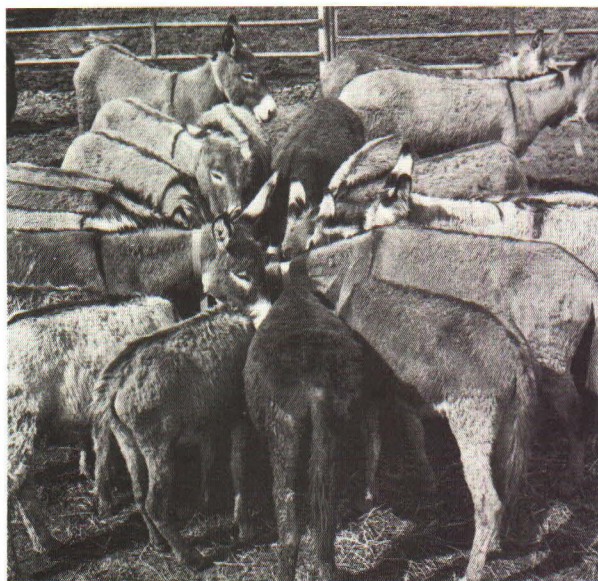
Why does BLM support legislation that would allow it to sell unadopted excess wild horses and burros?

We now are faced with the task of maintaining thousands of unadopted wild horses in holding facilities, at considerable expense. We feel this is an undesirable situation for the animals themselves, for BLM, and for the taxpayer funding the program.

The sale at public auction of unadopted excess animals would be an alternative to destruction. Although we recognize some of the animals might be sold to slaughterhouses, a public auction would provide one more opportunity for the animals to be placed in the private sector.

Are all wild horses and burros protected by law?

No. The Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act applies only to those animals on public lands administered by BLM or the Forest



Wild burros are available at most Bureau of Land Management adoption centers, especially those in the eastern and southwestern States.

Service. Horses and burros on other Federal lands, such as national parks, wildlife refuges, and military installations, are not protected by the Act.

Aren't wild horses and burros an endangered species?

No. Although Congress declared in the Act that "these horses and burros are fast disappearing from the American scene," the animals have never been in danger of extinction. Since 1971, herd populations have increased from an estimated level of 17,000 wild horses and burros to approximately 64,000 animals. These animals have few natural predators and under the protection of the Act increase at an approximate annual rate of 16 percent.

Why can't wild horses and burros simply be left alone on the public lands?

That sounds like an easy solution, but unmanaged wild horse or burro herds could spell disaster to the rangeland resources, to the wildlife and domestic livestock that share the range with them, and ultimately to themselves.

The fragile public rangelands in the West are managed by BLM for a broad range of values and uses, including recreation, timber, wilderness, mineral production, and scenic and cultural resources. The vegetation on these lands must protect watersheds and prevent erosion. It also provides a limited supply of forage for livestock, and habitat and food for deer, antelope, elk, bighorn sheep, and other wildlife, in addition to wild horses and burros.

To protect the vegetation from overgrazing and to maintain healthy animal herds, it is necessary to control population levels of all animals on the public lands. Livestock are managed through permits limiting the numbers of cattle, sheep, or other domestic animals by seasons and

areas of use. Wildlife numbers are managed by State fish and game departments. Similarly, wild horse and burro populations are controlled through removal of excess animals.

Why can't BLM move excess wild horses and burros to other areas of the public lands?

In the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, Congress directed that these animals be managed "in the areas where presently found, as an integral part of the natural system of the public lands." Thus, herd areas are limited to those areas of the public lands where wild horses or burros existed in 1971.

Even if relocation were an available alternative, it would not solve the problem caused by natural increase and the resultant need to control herds at some level. As with any herbivore, given sufficient time and the lack of natural controls, the herds would expand to fill, and exceed, the carrying capacity of any habitat provided.

BLM officials have identified 303 herd areas containing approximately 47.5 million acres of public lands. If the population in a herd area identified for long term management of wild horses or burros falls below an acceptable level, excess animals from another herd area may be brought in to maintain a viable population.

Why doesn't BLM control wild horse and burro populations with antifertility drugs?

BLM has been evaluating both stallion-focused and mare-focused approaches to fertility control to manage rates of increase. The National Academy of Sciences' Committee on Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros also has reviewed the subject and concluded that neither approach has been developed to the point of being ready to use in the management of wild horse herds. We propose

to use part of the \$1 million Congress made available for research this year to study the subject further.

Why does BLM use helicopters to round up wild horses and burros? Isn't that illegal and inhumane?

Humane use of helicopters in BLM and Forest Service roundups was authorized by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. Helicopter use is more humane to the wild horses, the wranglers, and their mounts than the more traditional method of rounding up by cowboys on horseback. One of the greatest advantages of using the helicopter is that once the horses are heading in the right direction, the helicopter can back off and let them proceed at their own speed. When the terrain is steep, they can rest. If they were being herded by saddle horses, this could not be allowed because as soon as they catch their breath, they will scatter in different directions.

Bands may also scatter when they are gathered by helicopter, but with the helicopter's ability to hover, fly slowly, even fly backwards, the pilot easily moves the band back together. If they were being herded by horseback, the rider would be on a horse that has already traveled some distance, carrying weight, pursuing horses that are not, and often running in precarious footing while attempting to turn the band.

Frequently, horses that have been herded toward a trap by helicopter for more than an hour are not sweating; the foals are running up in the front of the band, indicating that even they are not tired; and they exhibit no symptoms of terror or unusual stress. This may be because wild horses and burros do not expect a predator from the air and are instinctively more fearful of pursuit from the ground.

How can someone adopt a wild horse or burro?

By submitting an adoption application form describing the type of animal wanted and the kind of feed, transportation, and facilities available for its care. Applications and a brochure describing the Adopt-A-Horse Program are available from your local BLM office, or by writing:

Adopt-A-Horse
Bureau of Land Management (130)
Room 5600
18th & C Streets, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

To qualify to adopt, you must be of legal age (parents may adopt

for their children), have no prior convictions for inhumane treatment of animals, and have adequate facilities and means of transportation to provide humane care and proper treatment for a wild horse or burro.

Where are the animals available for adoption?

Wild horse and burro adoption centers are located across the Nation, although most are found in the West. Facilities open year-round are found in Kingman, Arizona (burros only); Susanville, California; Ridgecrest, California (burros only); Boise, Idaho (horses only); Palomino Valley, Nevada; Burns, Oregon (horses only);

Lewisberry, Pennsylvania; Cross Plains, Tennessee; Collinsville, Texas; and Rock Springs, Wyoming (horses only).

BLM also sets up temporary "satellite" adoption centers in sections of the country some distance from permanent centers. These centers typically operate for 3 to 4 days, generally over a weekend. Watch your local media or contact your local BLM office for information on temporary centers in your area.

How much does it cost to adopt a wild horse or burro?

Adoption fees are \$125 per horse and \$75 per burro.

STATE OFFICES U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

ALASKA:

Bureau of Land Management
701 C Street, Box 13
Anchorage, AK 99513
(907) 271-5555

ARIZONA:

Bureau of Land Management
3707 North 7th Street
Phoenix, AZ 85014
(602) 241-5504

CALIFORNIA:

Bureau of Land Management
Federal Building
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825
(916) 484-4724

COLORADO AND KANSAS:

Bureau of Land Management
2020 Arapahoe Street
Denver, CO 80205
(303) 294-7092

STATES EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, PLUS IOWA, MINNESOTA, MISSOURI, ARKANSAS AND LOUISIANA:

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Bureau of Land Management
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(208) 334-1770

MONTANA, NORTH DAKOTA AND

SOUTH DAKOTA:
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222 N. 32nd Street
P.O. Box 36800
Billings, MT 59107
(406) 657-6561

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Reno, NV 89520
(702) 784-5311

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Bureau of Land Management
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P.O. Box 2965
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(503) 231-6274

UTAH:

Bureau of Land Management
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Adopt a wild horse or burro. Thousands need homes and can be trained for farming, riding, showing, packing and other everyday uses.



Pictured is Carole Colwell, a member of the Echoing Hoofbeats 4-H Club in Lewisberry, Pennsylvania, with Sir Echo, the 50,000th wild horse and burro placed in a foster home by the Adopt-A-Horse Program.

For information
and an
application, write:

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Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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