

Marines help a few good foals

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RESCUE MISSION: U.S. Marine Mounted Color Guard members Rafael Delgado, front, and S.K. Moertl deliver 14 orphans to a Reno stable

Tuesday. The California-based Marines volunteered to drive the wild foals abandoned by their mares from Tonopah to Reno. **Story, 3B**

Marines bring orphaned foals to Reno stable

By Michael Phillis
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Organizers of an effort to save orphaned foals from death in the southern Nevada desert got help from a few good men Tuesday.

The U.S. Marines Mounted Color Guard, based in Barstow, Calif., delivered 14 of the baby horses to a stable in Reno that has been donated to temporarily house them. The horses are from 1 to 8 weeks old.

"These will make the best horses you can get anywhere when they get older," Staff Sgt. S.K. Moertl said.

Moertl should know. The 15-member Marine color guard rides all palomino horses taken from wild horse herds in Nevada. In 1989, they won the national championship in competition for mounted color guards.

The young colts and fillies are being abandoned by their mares on the Nellis test and bombing range southeast of Tonopah because of a lack of water and food to support the 4,000 horses there.

The Bureau of Land Management is thinning the herd by capturing 2,000 and bringing them to Palomino Valley north of Reno, but does not have the facilities to care for the foals.

Moertl said the color guard performed in a parade in Silver City, Nev., and learned of the need.

Moertl and two other marine volunteers drove seven hours Monday to Tonopah to pick up 18 foals, then another five hours to Palomino Valley, where the BLM processed them. Four of the colts were old enough to stay with the adults and the other 14 were delivered to the stable Tuesday.

In the afternoon, the Marines were off to Tonopah to pick up another load.