

Mustang and Burro Trails On Delmarva

*A newsletter by the Delmarva Chapter of the American Mustang and Burro Association, Inc.
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Betrayal!

In a gross betrayal of the public trust on Monday, June 19, 2006, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rounded up 337 mustangs, including very young foals, from the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada. The goal is to remove all wild horses and burros from the Refuge, even those that stray over the boundary from other public domain lands. This gives a new meaning to the word "refuge."

On June 6th a research group exposed this plan to eliminate the Sheldon wild horses and pay "mass adopters" \$300 per horse to take them. Following a massive public outcry false assurances were given to all who inquired. Nonetheless, the gather took place, new gates were installed, armed law enforcement agents were posted and the public was kept in an area 2 miles back from the holding pens. A few concerned citizens were allowed to minimally view selected captured animals.

Prior to the gather an attorney from the Animal Welfare Institute in a letter dated June 12, requested a copy of the federally mandated Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge (SNWR) horse management plan along with revisions or amendments to the plan; National Environmental Policy compliance documentation and the joint management plan that Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) should have developed with the BLM. The Animal Welfare Institute urged the FWS to delay any plan to remove horses and burros in order to determine whether the FWS was in compliance with federal law. So far as I know no such documents were received. Other organizations urged delaying the gather until after the foaling season. This fell on deaf ears.

The lies told are legion. Sheldon management has given a variety of reasons for desiring to eliminate the wild horse population. First they said the horses

competed with antelope and sage grouse. However a FWS study refutes this claiming that there is no adverse relationship between these species. Then they changed the story to claim that the horses were damaging water sources but the last environmental assessment was done in 1980 when cattle were wallowing in the Refuge's streams and ponds. The FWS insists that the horses are a non-native species in spite of recent scientific findings that horses originated in North America and disappeared until reintroduced in the 1500's, but non-native pheasants and chukkers are permitted in the Refuge for hunters enjoyment.

Sheldon Range manager, Brian Day, claims that June is not the height of the foaling season but presented no data to verify this very odd foaling pattern. Then immediately after the gather the FWS announced that all foals had arrived with their mothers and none were hurt. But, by Monday, June 26th FWS personnel were busy cleaning up dead foals in the pens where 9 had died at birth or been aborted in the pens. Some captured mares gave evidence of having recently given birth with their foaling placentas still attached but their foals missing. Additionally, 8 foals were found on the range, 5 were dead and 3 (ages 4 to 6 weeks) rescued by a citizens' group are receiving veterinary care. One of these has since died. Corroborating pictures and the vet report can be found at www.wildhorsepreservation.cor/sheldon.html

The public was also told that only one adult horse suffered a minor injury. However, overheard radio communications between FWS and field crews discussed what to do with a horse with a broken leg. The decision was made to shoot it.

As if this wasn't bad enough, the FWS announced plans to give Gary Graham, an agent that operated out of a slaughter yard, a "few" horses. This "few" turned out to be 62+. For whatever reason the FWS has invented a plan to use taxpayer dollars to encourage people to take large numbers of OUR wild

horses while prohibiting small adoptions. These animals belong to the American people not the FWS.

We may never know the reason why the Fish and Wildlife Service has chosen to wage this inhumane war on wild horses and burros. The Fish and Wildlife Service along with the Bureau of Land Management fall under the umbrella of the U.S. Department of the Interior. How the FWS can openly violate the Wild-Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act defies all logic and is beyond this writer's comprehension.

The Fish and Wildlife service can be reached at:

<http://www.fws.gov>

Or

Mr. H. Dale Hall, Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Main Interior
1849 C Street NW, Room 3238
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Mr. Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary
U. S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240
e-mail

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NEWS & NOTES

The **Fun Show** held on May 21 at Dill's Auction was a big success. The weather was picture perfect but a tad windy. **Alycia Hovey** was show manager. Everyone who attended had a great time.

The Chapter participated in **Kids Fest** at the Delaware Fairgrounds on June 10. This event is a "festival with a horsey flavor" with proceeds going to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware and the Scouts. The Chapter had a booth with a display along with one burro (Buttercup) and one mustang (Chance) for petting. Both animals were popular with the kids who visited the booth. **Mike Callahan, Ashley Harrell, Connie Lundquist and Mark & Marge** worked this event.

Ashley Harrell is chairperson in charge of the Chapter's Honor Guard/Drill Team. This is just the beginning, so members are doing everything at a walk and getting their horses accustomed to synchronized working with other horses. Anyone interested in participating in this group is urged to contact Ashley.

It is not necessary to be riding a mustang to be a part of the group.

Congratulations to Stephanie Bailey, Mustang Princess and to Ashley Harrell, Mustang Queen. These two lovely ladies were crowned at the June Chapter meeting.

Ashley Harrell has done an outstanding job in making up a display board for the Chapter. Members will take this display to various functions.

DATES TO REMEMBER

July 4 Parades in Smyrna and Dover. Call Mark at 302-422-1861

July 8-9 Francis and Rosemary Kinnamon's 13th Annual Ride. Call 410-482-8514

July 21-23 BLM Adoption, Ithaca, NY

July 27 "Mustang Day" at the DEC fair booth

August 12 Chestertown, MD 300th Anniversary Parade. Call Ashley Harrell 302-266-0268

August 18-20 Wild Horse and Burro Expo, Reno Livestock Center, Reno, NV

August 25 Fair Hill Ride (Horses must be in stalls. Deadline for stalls August 17. Contact person: Bettie Campbell 302-422-2851 cell 302-236-3334)

September 9-10 Tuckahoe Outlaw Days

September 16-17 Mid-Atlantic Wild Horse and Burro Show, Tailwinds Farm, North East, MD

September 22-24 BLM Adoption, Lorton, VA

November 9-12 Equine Affaire, Springfield, MA

