

HEADLINE: Horse tamer uses gentle touch

AUTHOR : Keith Rogers

RUNDATE : May 10 1995 PAGE: 1b

Horse tamer uses gentle touch

Steve Harris does not break the wild equines he prepares for adoption, but instead builds their trust.

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

Standing like a statue, with his arms at his side, Steve Harris, a self-proclaimed horse psychologist, uses body language to tame young, wild horses captured from Nevada's ranges.

"We're working with his mind all the time," he said Monday evening while he tried to win the confidence of a black stud colt that sashayed inside a special corral set up outside Sam Boyd Stadium for the Helldorado Days wild horse adoption.

Harris of Cottonwood, Ariz., is a patient, gentle cowboy with a gray beard and a white hat. He does not use force or restraint to bring the yearling under control.

Instead, he speaks softly and develops eye contact with the colt. He slowly moves in one direction and forces the horse to move out of what he calls its "bubble," the area around it in which it senses intrusion. Depending on the horse, its bubble might be 5

feet or 50 feet from any person who encroaches on its territory.

Playing a chess match, Harris, a cowboy for the past 45 years, takes three steps toward the colt's hindquarters. The colt wheels its head around and looks at him with its ears perked. Then Harris stops, and the horse freezes, almost daring him to move another inch in its direction.

"They want you to be a leader," Harris said, still focused on one of the colt's brown eyes that is visible from his vantage point.

Slowly, he raises his hand, and the colt darts to the other side of the special corral as if Harris is a giant magnet and the horse is another magnet repulsed by Harris.

The corral is an invention he calls a Porta-Flex safety round pen. The pen, about the size of a three-car garage, is designed with nylon ropes and fabric sides that give it the tension of trampoline, allowing the horse to bounce away if it strikes it.

"It's really a reward system of pressure and release," he said.

Harris said it takes from 15 minutes to up to two hours to win a wild horse's confidence to the point of making contact with it inside its bubble. Sometimes he uses a flag -- an antenna with a plastic bag attached to it -- to flush the horse in a certain direction.

"I usually let him touch me first," he said. Then, he touches the horse on different parts of its hide to get it warmed up for other exercises to come, such as putting blankets on its back and later a saddle.

Harris has helped 110 wild horses lose their fear of humans, so they can be adopted.

On Monday, the Bureau of Land Management had 10 horses and 11 burros available for adoption during evenings of the Helldorado Days celebration. Over the weekend, 15 horses and nine burros went to qualified adopters, said Gary McFadden, a wild horse specialist from the bureau's Las Vegas District.

The adoption costs are normally \$125 for a horse and \$75 for a burro, but these were discounted \$5 apiece to compensate for the Helldorado entrance fee. To qualify, adopters must be U.S. citizens, be at least age 18 and have an adequate corral or accommodations to care for the animal.

McFadden said that the burros were taken from public lands in Northern Arizona and

that the horses were captured off the most overcrowded herd management area in Nevada -- the Nevada Wild Horse Range, a 50-square-mile chunk of the Nellis Air Force Range, 20 miles east of Tonopah.

According to the last census in 1989, that range had a wild horse population of 6,247, but bureau documents showed the range can support about 2,000 horses, a figure described as the appropriate management level.

McFadden said the appropriate management level for the Nevada Wild Horse Range has been revised to 1,000. That means with the 1995 population estimated at 2,500, the bureau will have to capture 750 horses per year during the next two years to get the numbers within the appropriate level.

Some conservation groups have disputed the census figures and have argued there are less wild horses on some ranges than the bureau's census indicates.

Nevertheless, McFadden said that with herds increasing 25 percent per year, the bureau must gather about 10,000 wild horses and burros nationwide for adoption. Up to 95 percent of those horses go to adopters who live on the East Coast, in the Midwest and in the South.

notes=photos color Clint Karlsen adption
catchline=Horse tamer uses gentle touch
keywords = Keith Rogers McFadden Harris Helldorado wild horses burros adoption
Nellis

HEADLINE: Whos gonna watch the wild horses?
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Feb 12 1996 PAGE: 1B

Whos gonna watch the wild horses? It was 2:40 p.m. on a breezy February day when George Perkins peered through binoculars, hoping to see the first wild horse round a

ridge at the base of Cold Creek Canyon. The faint thunder of a helicopter could be heard in the distance, as a trio of A-10A Warthog attack jets darted through wispy, winter clouds during practice bombing runs across from Indian Springs, 40 miles northwest of Las Vegas. But the helicopter was not on a military training mission. Instead it was flying low over a band of wild horses, driving them toward a makeshift chute that cowboys had strung out of wire and burlap to lead them to a metal corral. There the herd would be thinned. The young ones would be put up for adoption at the government's Palomino Valley facility near Reno. The older ones, those at least 6 years old, would be released back on the range near Cold Creek, where plenty of grass covers a slope that was reseed after it burned in the 1980s. Some healthy colts also would be released to maintain the quality of the herd. "The biggest concern for us is to keep the numbers in balance," explained Perkins, a U.S. Forest Service

resource officer overseeing the capture by Dave Cattoor, a Bureau of Land Management contractor on loan to the Forest Service. Cattoor said his outfit typically receives \$125 per head for a horse capture, depending on the size of the herd. Perkins said if the herd is not thinned periodically, "In a couple years we would have enough horses to have a serious deterioration of vegetation." That, he said, would affect not only the health of the horses but the quality of wildlife in general. The snowcapped Spring Mountains above the community of Cold Creek provide enough water to support the horses, as well as burros, elk, deer, mountain lions, bighorn sheep and other wildlife on the north side of the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area. The various bands in the Cold Creek herd combine for a total of 130 horses. Because of the plentiful supply of forage and water, the herd has fared well since the last roundup in 1993. Perkins said the herd increases by 30 to

40 percent a year, even when older horses and colts separated from their mothers fall prey to mountain lions. This year, after four days of gathering, 127 were corralled and 52 were hauled by tractor-trailer rigs to Palomino Valley for adoption. The remaining 75 were released back to the same parts of the range where they were found. Forest Service officials estimate 400 wild horses roam 400,000 acres of the Spring Mountains. The service's lands contain about 5 percent of the U.S. wild horse population. The rest are on public lands the BLM controls. A census that was disputed in 1992 by a wild horse watchdog group found Nevada has about three-fifths or 33,000 out of 50,000 wild horses and burros nationwide. But the group, the Public Lands Resource Council, said an independent aerial survey set Nevada's wild horse and burro population at 8,231 instead of the 33,434 figure that the BLM reported in its 1991 survey. Perkins said the Cold Creek herd consists of a variety of breeds and

colors, including descendants of Percherons -- tall, fast-trotting draft horses that were kicked loose by pioneers -- pintos from around Pahrump, palominos from Red Rock Canyon, and an assortment of blacks, bays and buckskins born in the Spring Mountains. After small groups containing five to 20 horses are herded by helicopter from the burn area across several miles of open range, they are welcomed by an unsaddled decoy horse, one that's trained to lead them the last 200 yards to the entrance of the chute. Once inside the chute, cowboys waving "wild rags" -- plastic sacks attached to whips -- drive the horses into a capture corral, closing gates behind them. On this roundup, Desert, the decoy horse, dashed toward the chute and drew with him five of the seven horses herded by the helicopter. Cowboys on horseback chased the two strays until they could be lassoed and directed to the corral. At the corral, the horses are given a health check, sorted by sex and age, and freeze-branded if

necessary. Age is determined by inspecting their teeth. Sara Mayben, a Forest Service ecologist, said cowboys in this year's roundup found the horses in better shape than three years ago. "There are not as many ribs showing," she noted. Some area residents objected to the February capture, she said. "Some in Cold Creek are concerned that we're taking their pets. They've been feeding them, and they come up right to their doors," Mayben said. Perkins said the captures are mandated by the Wild Horse and Burro Act, which requires Interior Department agencies to maintain a balanced, high-quality wild horse population. Mayben said a Colorado veterinarian, Barbara Page, was on hand to videotape the capture a week ago to compare how wild horses distribute their weight differently from domestic horses that have been shod. Cattoor said the wild horses tend to walk on the bottom of their hooves, while domestic horses load their weight on the rims of their hooves, sometimes resulting in bone-

tissue damage.

Keith Rogers

..archivephotocaption..

It was 2:40 p.m. on a breezy February day when George Perkins peered through binoculars, hoping to see the first wild horse round a ridge at the base of Cold Creek Canyon.

The faint thunder of a helicopter could be heard in the distance, as a trio of A-10A Warthog attack jets darted through wispy, winter clouds during practice bombing runs across from Indian Springs, 40 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

But the helicopter was not on a military training mission. Instead it was flying low over a band of wild horses, driving them toward a makeshift chute that cowboys had strung out of wire and burlap to lead them to a metal corral.

There the herd would be thinned. The young ones would be put up for adoption at the government's Palomino Valley facility near Reno. The older ones, those at least 6 years old, would be released back on the range near Cold Creek, where plenty of grass covers a slope that was reseed after it burned in the 1980s. Some healthy colts also would be released to maintain the quality of the herd.

"The biggest concern for us is to keep the numbers in balance," explained Perkins, a U.S. Forest Service resource officer overseeing the capture by Dave Cattoor, a Bureau of Land Management contractor on loan to the Forest Service.

Cattoor said his outfit typically receives \$125 per head for a horse capture, depending on the size of the herd.

Perkins said if the herd is not thinned periodically, "In a couple years we would have enough horses to have a serious deterioration of vegetation." That, he said, would affect not only the health of the horses but the quality of wildlife in general.

The snowcapped Spring Mountains above the community of Cold Creek provide enough water to support the horses, as well as burros, elk, deer, mountain lions, bighorn sheep and other wildlife on the north side of the Spring Mountains National

Recreation Area.

The various bands in the Cold Creek herd combine for a total of 130 horses. Because of the plentiful supply of forage and water, the herd has fared well since the last roundup in 1993. Perkins said the herd increases by 30 to 40 percent a year, even when older horses and colts separated from their mothers fall prey to mountain lions.

This year, after four days of gathering, 127 were corralled and 52 were hauled by tractor-trailer rigs to Palomino Valley for adoption. The remaining 75 were released back to the same parts of the range where they were found.

Forest Service officials estimate 400 wild horses roam 400,000 acres of the Spring Mountains. The service's lands contain about 5 percent of the U.S. wild horse population. The rest are on public lands the BLM controls.

A census that was disputed in 1992 by a wild horse watchdog group found Nevada has about three-fifths or 33,000 out of 50,000 wild horses and burros nationwide. But the group, the Public Lands Resource Council, said an independent aerial survey set Nevada's wild horse and burro population at 8,231 instead of the 33,434 figure that the BLM reported in its 1991 survey.

Perkins said the Cold Creek herd consists of a variety of breeds and colors, including descendants of Percherons -- tall, fast-trotting draft horses that were kicked loose by pioneers -- pintos from around Pahrump, palominos from Red Rock Canyon, and an assortment of blacks, bays and buckskins born in the Spring Mountains.

After small groups containing five to 20 horses are herded by helicopter from the burn area across several miles of open range, they are welcomed by an unsaddled decoy horse, one that's trained to lead them the last 200 yards to the entrance of the chute. Once inside the chute, cowboys waving "wild rags" -- plastic sacks attached to whips -- drive the horses into a capture corral, closing gates behind them.

On this roundup, Desert, the decoy horse, dashed toward the chute and drew with him five of the seven horses herded by the helicopter. Cowboys on horseback chased the two strays until they could be lassoed and directed to the corral.

At the corral, the horses are given a health check, sorted by sex and age, and freeze-branded if necessary. Age is determined by inspecting their teeth.

Sara Mayben, a Forest Service ecologist, said cowboys in this year's roundup found the horses in better shape than three years ago. "There are not as many ribs showing,"

she noted.

Some area residents objected to the February capture, she said. "Some in Cold Creek are concerned that we're taking their pets. They've been feeding them, and they come up right to their doors," Mayben said.

Perkins said the captures are mandated by the Wild Horse and Burro Act, which requires Interior Department agencies to maintain a balanced, high-quality wild horse population.

Mayben said a Colorado veterinarian, Barbara Page, was on hand to videotape the capture a week ago to compare how wild horses distribute their weight differently from domestic horses that have been shod.

Cattoor said the wild horses tend to walk on the bottom of their hooves, while domestic horses load their weight on the rims of their hooves, sometimes resulting in bone-tissue damage.

HEADLINE: Round 'Em Up
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Jul 4 1996 PAGE: 1B

Round 'Em Up

BLM officials corral wild horses and burros who were surviving on limited food and water supplies.

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

With little public notice, government cowboys using a helicopter drove free-roaming horses and burros Wednesday into corrals at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area in an effort to trim the herds to minimum levels.

The "quasi-emergency" capture, according to Bureau of Land Management officials in charge of the herds, was spurred by drought conditions that have left little forage for the estimated 80 horses and 138 burros that are competing for food and scarce water supplies in the conservation area.

Notice of the capture appeared on post office bulletin boards, one BLM official said, but other than that only a few wild-horse enthusiasts and the National Wild Horse Association were aware of the roundup.

Friday's roundup was the first ever for the Red Rock herd.

By noon Wednesday, 12 horses and 47 burros, some of them appearing haggard with ribs showing, feasted on hay and water in corrals where they were separated by sex and age and treated for stomach worms.

BLM wild horse specialist Gary McFadden said he intends to capture all of the estimated 80 horses and most of the 138 burros in Red Rock Canyon, putting up for adoption all but about 50 of the burros and most of the horses that are age 9 or younger.

McFadden estimates that 60 percent of the horses will be returned to the Red Rock Canyon area, which includes Tunnel and Bird springs south of the canyon. That would put the herd at 48, or two less than what BLM regulations say is needed for genetic viability. Horses from other herd areas would then have to be introduced to supplement the genetic pool of the Red Rock herd, he said.

"We want to have horses here and we want to have good horses here, but we want our horses to be in balance with the ecosystem," he said.

Wild-horse enthusiast Mary Sue Kunz, of Las Vegas, stood by the canyon's Oliver Ranch corrals Friday to observe the captured horses she regards as her friends.

"I've been dreading this day because some of my horse friends, like this guy, he's going to be adopted out," Kunz said, pointing to a stud in one of the corrals.

"Those young horses, I'm hoping Gary (McFadden) won't find them. Some of these

that are young enough to be adopted, we ought to keep here. They're smart horses and they're adaptable," she said.

For the last five years Kunz has photographed most of them and has documented 77, which she has either named or identified by color, sex, age and location. For example, entry No. 67 in her log is a "paint mare from Pahrump, dam of No. 66 and probably No. 65."

During the last three years, the U.S. Forest Service has conducted two captures in the Spring Mountains. The BLM has conducted one emergency gather in Johnnie Herd Management Area, northwest of Red Rock Canyon near Pahrump. Other small roundups have occurred, including one in Ash Meadows.

The Red Rock capture will last through Sunday. McFadden said additional roundups are scheduled for the Johnnie herd and a herd at Nellis Air Force Range, the state's largest, where the BLM wants to limit the horse population to 1,000, a cap set in 1990.

The BLM has only set what is known as "appropriate management levels" for horses and burros on the Nellis and Gold Butte ranges.

While appropriate management levels are supposed to be based on available vegetation, water supplies and other concerns, such as competition with other wildlife and proximity to highways, McFadden said no caps have been set for the Red Rock and Johnnie herds because he hasn't collected or compiled the necessary data.

The data-gathering process has spanned two years, he said, noting that a draft wild horse management plan for the herd is expected to be released for public comment late this year.

McFadden said the Red Rock and Johnnie herd captures were not prompted by a June 25 fatal traffic accident involving a burro on Blue Diamond Road that killed Theresa Whitney of Pahrump. The captures had been planned before that, he said.

National Wild Horse Association member Dave Tattam, the association's former field director, said he realizes the necessity for the Red Rock capture given the drought conditions and the health of the horses.

"I wish you could leave them out there and never fool with them. The food is poor and the water is poor out there," Tattam said.

McFadden agreed that water conditions at Tunnel Spring have not been optimum. Three weeks ago the spring's trough was drained because of a broken float in the system.

"We've hauled water three or four times in the last three weeks and had 40 horses waiting for the water," he said.

notes=Gary McFadden Mary Sue Kunz Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area Spring Mountains BLM photos color sagers

catchline=Round 'Em Up

keywords = Keith Rogers Bureau of Land Management wild horses burros

HEADLINE: BLM seeks help for horse care

AUTHOR : Keith Rogers

RUNDATE : Jul 24 1996 PAGE: 5B

BLM seeks help for horse care

Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

..archivephotocaption..

Review-Journal

The National Wild Horse Association and the Bureau of Land Management are seeking donations and volunteers to help care for young wild horses removed from Nellis Air Force Range.

The orphaned foals gathered from the Nevada Wild Horse Range on the Air Force range near Tonopah have been transported to Las Vegas for nurturing until they are strong enough to eat and drink on their own. The foals had been abandoned by their mothers because of extreme drought conditions, according to a BLM statement.

When they are strong enough to travel, they will be taken to the bureau's Palomino

Valley Horse Center near Reno for veterinary care, freeze branding and immunizations, the release said.

Some of them might be available for adoption in Las Vegas this fall at \$125 each along with wild horses that were rounded up this month from a herd at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, Dave Tattam, a National Wild Horse Association member, said Tuesday.

Anyone who wants to volunteer or donate money may contact the National Wild Horse Association at 452-5853 or the BLM at 647-5000.

notes=Association Nellis blm horses care feeding photo lennox mclendon

catchline=BLM seeks help for horse care

keywords = Keith Rogers Bureau of Land Management National Wild Horse

HEADLINE: Wild horses seized from ranch
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Nov 9 1996 PAGE: 1B

Wild horses seized from ranch

Rangers confiscate palomino and mustang pintos after a report the animals had been corralled.

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

Public lands rangers staked out a ranch near Pahrump for two days in September to

confiscate a pair of wild horses from a man officials said corralled them, according to interviews and court documents that have since been unsealed. The man was not charged with a crime.

In interviews this week, Bureau of Land Management officials said the rangers and a wild horse specialist executed a search warrant on Kenneth Grubb's ranch, east of state Route 160 outside of Pahrump, while Grubb and his wife, Sherrie, were away from the ranch at a grocery store.

The rangers waited until the Grubbs left the property because Kenneth Grubb had been confrontational and once stood on his land brandishing a shotgun after he refused to let authorities inspect the horses, according to BLM wild horse specialist Gary McFadden.

The horses, an 18-month-old, rare-colored palomino pinto and a 4-month-old brown-and-white mustang pinto -- both stud colts -- were being kept this week at a BLM corral west of Las Vegas.

The older horse, because of its rare white-and-tan color is expected to be returned to the herd of so-called paint horses that roam the Pahrump ranges. But the younger horse will probably be adopted to a BLM employee, McFadden said.

"The little guy is too small to turn back," he said, explaining that District Law Enforcement Ranger Randolph August pursued the search warrant based on McFadden's knowledge of the herd and how the colt's coloration matched the rest of the herd.

U.S. District Court records show the search warrant was signed by Magistrate Judge Robert Johnston Sept. 17; the horses were seized from Grubb's corrals Sept. 19.

In a previously sealed affidavit, August said the bureau was acting on complaints from a neighbor who claimed Grubb had corralled the horses.

The affidavit said BLM Ranger Ken Burger observed the horses in the corrals on Sept. 11 and later contacted Grubb about them during a conversation at Linda Street and Summer Way on the outskirts of Pahrump.

When asked where the horses came from, Grubb replied that he was keeping them for his brother who had adopted them in Las Vegas, the affidavit said.

Court papers state no one named Grubb has adopted any paint horse from the BLM

since 1978.

In interviews, the Grubbs claimed the young horse was abandoned after it was born on their property and they were caring for it because range conditions have been so poor that the BLM has rounded up many horses for adoption.

"How come they have the right to hold what they removed from our property? They did not file any action against us," Sherrie Grubb said Wednesday.

Assistant Federal Public Defender Alexander Modaber confirmed that he sent Kenneth Grubb a letter informing him that the U.S. Attorney's office had decided not to proceed with criminal charges.

"I know your main concern is what will be done with the horses," Modaber's Oct. 28 letter said, explaining that an attempt was made to arrange for the BLM to let the Grubbs adopt the younger horse.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Schiess, who handled the case, said he had no comment as to why his office decided not to proceed with criminal charges against Kenneth Grubb.

McFadden said just because a wild horse is born on private property doesn't exclude it from laws that protect free-roaming, wild horses. Capturing a wild horse is a federal crime punishable by up to two years in jail and a \$2,000 fine.

"We couldn't adopt them out to them or it would have validated their theft," McFadden said.

Dan Morgan, who supervises the wild horse program at the bureau's Las Vegas District, said he had hoped that the Grubb case could have been handled differently, considering that two horses, valued at \$125 each, were the subject of legal proceedings and a stakeout that racked up overtime for three employees at \$25 per hour.

"There were concerns that this could have been done differently. To me we could have probably met with him and you could have done it differently," Morgan said.

notes=pinto paint Sherrie Kenneth Grubb Pahrump U.S. Attorney Modaber photo
color karlsen blm mcfadden
catchline=Wild horses seized from ranch

keywords = Keith Rogers Bureau of Land Management wild horse

HEADLINE: Horse roundup planned
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Jan 10 1997 PAGE: 2B

Horse roundup planned

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

Government cowboys are expected to round up more than half of the Nellis Air Force Range's wild horses by the end of the month, trimming the herd to 600.

A Bureau of Land Management spokeswoman said Thursday none of the horses is destined for a slaughterhouse despite published reports this week that at least 57 wild horses adopted by U.S. citizens since September have been sold to slaughterhouses in the United States and Canada.

"They would not be sent to slaughterhouses," BLM spokeswoman Maxine Shane said about the Nellis range roundup.

"If there are horses that are old, sick and lame that could not be successfully transported, then we have the authority to put those horses down," she said.

"But even if we (kill) them, they are not sold for commercial purposes. That's against the law," Shane said.

Poor range conditions and lack of adequate water supplies prompted the wild horses to gather on the Nellis range, according to Lorraine Buck, a spokeswoman for the

agency's Las Vegas District, which is conducting the roundup.

There are about 1,350 horses on the Nellis range. Buck said the BLM intends to remove about 750 animals.

Dave Tattam, a board member of the National Wild Horse Association, said before roundups were conducted during the past two years, the Nellis range supported as many as 6,000 wild horses, making it the most densely populated in the state.

Tattam said he doesn't understand how profits could be made by selling adopted wild horses to slaughterhouses because, by law, the person who adopts them must maintain them for at least a year before they can be sold.

At a minimum, he said, the owner would have to spend \$125 to adopt a horse and then invest between \$600 and \$750 per year to feed and care for a horse. At best, the seller would break even with a fattened horse.

Last year, the BLM rounded up 9,365 wild horses and burros nationwide.

More than half -- 5,884 -- came from Nevada, which is home to about 60 percent of the nation's wild horses.

Buck said some 8,000 of the wild horses and burros captured nationwide last year were adopted out, but only 116 of those went to Nevada residents.

Meat from some of the butchered wild horses has been sold to European outlets for human consumption, according to an Associated Press investigation, which also found that some BLM employees could not account for the whereabouts of their horses while others acknowledged some were sent to slaughterhouses.

Some BLM employees did acknowledge that some of their adopted horses were among those sent to slaughterhouses.

The Interior Department on Tuesday launched an investigation into whether government employees were profiting from the 25-year-old wild horse protection program that has put up more than 150,000 animals for adoption.

Buck said only "a couple" of district employees are among the 200 agency employees nationwide who have adopted more than 600 wild horses and burros in the past two years.

"They still have their horses," she said.

notes=Lorraine Buck Nellis Air Force Range blm photo file roundup burros
catchline=Horse roundup planned
keywords = Keith Rogers Nevada wild horses Bureau of Land Management

HEADLINE: Nevada has half of nation
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Mar 24 1997 PAGE: 3A

Nevada has half of nation's wild horses

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

With more than half the nation's population of wild horses and burros, Nevada has one of the most aggressive programs aimed at keeping their numbers in check with range conditions.

Tom Pogacnik, chief of the Bureau of Land Management's Wild Horse and Burro National Program Office, said the latest estimate, on Sept. 30, estimated Nevada's wild horse population at 22,796 and its wild burro population at 687.

Nationwide, he said, there are 42,138 wild horses and burros -- 35,286 horses and 6,852 burros.

But in January, government cowboys captured 778 from the largest herd management area, the Nevada Wild Horse Range on Nellis Air Force Range. Of those, 108 were euthanized by either shooting or lethal injection because they were in dire shape,

according to BLM records.

"Most of these were 25 to 30 years old with teeth worn down to the gum. They would slowly starve to death. Others were crippled or blind," Pogacnik said.

Most of the remaining captured horses were put up for adoption.

The Nellis range herd was reduced to about 800, but officials won't know exactly how many remain until a census is conducted by helicopter later this year.

The estimated sizes of five herds in the BLM's Las Vegas District account for 100 wild horses and 273 burros, down from 204 and 1,215 respectively after recent captures, according to district records.

In 1993, when then-BLM Director Jim Baca visited Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, where a herd of 50 horses roamed public lands west of Las Vegas, he said the wild horse and burro populations must be brought into check with what food and water supplies on the ranges can support.

But, Baca said, the course for dealing with that problem should be birth control, not shooting the animals and leaving them to die.

"We spend more on the wild horse and burro program (\$20 million in 1993) than we spend on the wilderness program (\$17 million)," he said.

The BLM is still experimenting with birth control methods for wild horses.

notes=blm pogacnik burro population baca blm

catchline=Nevada has half of nation

keywords = Keith Rogers Bureau of Land Management Baca wild horses

HEADLINE: Home on the range not so cozy for some wild horses

AUTHOR : Keith Rogers

RUNDATE : May 19 1997 PAGE: 1B

Home on the range not so cozy for some wild horses

Keith Rogers

..archivephotocaption..

Thirty-two wild horses have been found shot to death in Nevada since suspicious shootings of federally protected horses and burros made headlines in 1993, Bureau of Land Management officials said last week.

Records compiled by BLM Special Agent Donette Gordon show the 32 shootings are the focus of 11 investigations across the state.

The figure includes five wild horses found shot to death north of Ely near Ruby Marsh last month. The shootings probably occurred around March 18, according to BLM officials.

No arrests have been made in any of the cases.

"The BLM is offering \$2,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the responsible parties. We (also) are trying to put together some reward money from some other groups," said BLM spokeswoman Maxine Shane.

Callers can leave their information with Gordon at (702) 785-6667 or call a hot line for anonymous tips at (800) 521-6501.

Between May 1990 and June 1993, 68 free-roaming wild horses and 18 burros were killed in Nevada during seven incidents, including one that left 11 slain near Panaca and Caliente in a seven-month period ending April 1993.

That brings the total to 100 wild horses and burros killed in suspicious shootings this decade.

The figure is less than those killed in shooting sprees in 1987 and 1988 that left 660 horses dead in rural areas around Lovelock and Battle Mountain.

Those cases are still open, even though five people were arrested in connection with the crimes. A judge dismissed the cases partly because of lack of evidence despite investigations by BLM law enforcement personnel that turned up 75 bullets from nine

caliber weapons.

Shane said in addition to the 32 wild horse shootings since 1993, a Fallon man -- Chris Theodore Hicks -- was convicted in 1995 of illegally gathering wild horses from public land in the BLM's Winnemucca District. He pleaded guilty to the charges and U.S. District Court Judge Howard McKibben, in Reno, sentenced him to three years probation, four months of house detention and 100 hours of community service. No fine was levied.

Tom Pogacnik, chief of the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro National Program Office, has said the latest survey, done Sept. 30, estimated Nevada's wild horse population at 22,796 and its wild burro population at 687.

Nationwide there are 35,286 wild horses and 6,852 burros on public lands. That means Nevada's wild horses and burros, which total 23,483, account for more than half -- 56 percent -- of the 42,138 animals nationwide protected under the Wild Horse and Burro Act.

--Keith Rogers

Wondering how a local story turned out or what happened to someone in the news? Contact City Editor Steve Papinchak at 383-0289 or Steve_Papinchak@lvvj.com, and we will try to answer your question in this column.

notes=keith rogers shot blm killed pognacik
catchline=Home on the range not so cozy for some wild horses
keywords = update photo color wild horses burros donette gordon suspicious

HEADLINE: Investigators seeking clues in horse shootings
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Dec 30 1998 PAGE: 1B

Investigators seeking clues in horse shootings

Authorities say high-powered weapons were used to kill or wound 31 free-roaming equines.

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

Investigators conducted autopsies Tuesday on some of the 31 free-roaming horses that have been found shot to death or wounded since Sunday near Sparks in what they described as the worst mass killing of horses in Nevada in a decade.

The state's chief investigator in the case, John Tyson, said most of the horses were still bleeding when he arrived at the scene just south of Lockwood and about five miles east of Sparks a few hours after a motorist reported hearing shots in the area about 2 p.m. Sunday.

"A lot of them were shot multiple times at close range, and (some) were shot in the buttocks, which means they were running when they were shot," Tyson said in a telephone interview from the area where field autopsies were being conducted.

He said investigators from his agency -- the Nevada Division of Agriculture -- and from Storey and Washoe counties have several leads they are pursuing but, so far, they don't have any suspects. A pile of 17 shell casings was found about 50 yards from some of the carcasses.

"I think these were random acts of killing due to people target shooting. I will tell you we are dealing with high-powered rifles," he said.

Several young colts and pregnant mares were among the dead horses discovered Sunday and Monday in an area known as Devil's Flat, just south of Interstate 80.

Paul Iverson, administrator of the Agriculture Division, said, "I think it's absolutely tragic. ... They weren't hurting anybody."

The 31 horses, some of which were found wounded and had to be destroyed, are not

technically wild horses, such as those that belong to designated herds roaming federal public lands. Instead they are stray horses, which have descended from privately owned horses and were roaming on private or state-owned lands.

Free-roaming wild horses, which have descended from horses living on federal lands, are protected by the Wild Horse and Burro Act.

Even though stray horses are not covered by the act, Dawn Lappin, the director of a horse preservation group -- Wild Horses Organized Assistance -- said she will seek felony charges against anyone arrested in connection with the shootings.

"I think this was strictly a malicious act by someone with a new rifle who wanted target practice and would have shot anything like a horse, a cow or a deer. It was mean. I don't think there was any political motive in doing it," she said.

She said her group and others, including the Virginia Range Wildlife Protection Association, have raised more than \$20,000 in reward money for the arrest the person or persons who shot the horses.

The state's worst wild horse shooting sprees, in 1987 and 1988, are believed to have been linked to friction between ranchers and preservationists. They left 660 wild horses dead in rural areas around Lovelock and Battle Mountain. Five people were arrested in connection with the crimes, but a judge dismissed the cases partly because of lack of evidence.

In those cases, Bureau of Land Management agents interviewed 400 people, examined bones and carcasses from more than 600 horses, and collected 75 bullets from nine different caliber weapons. But the agency was unable to get an indictment because none of the bullets could be linked to any particular weapon.

Also, between May 1990 and June 1993, 68 wild horses and 18 burros were killed in Nevada during seven incidents. Included in that tally were five wild horses from a Red Rock Canyon herd.

In the Lockwood horse shootings, Tyson, who is a Storey County range management officer and a deputy state brand inspector, said investigators have recovered two bullets from 13 horses examined.

"I will tell you we are dealing with high-powered rifles, a thirty-ought-six (30.06) and a two-twenty-three (.223)" caliber rifle, he said.

Tyson said the first 25 animals were found over a 5-square-mile area. Six more were reported found late Tuesday by crews in helicopters canvassing the area.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

notes=blm photo color map color killed shootings red rock canyon horse shootings
tyson iverson lappin

catchline=Investigators seeking clues in horse shootings

keywords = Keith Rogers wild horses lockwood bureau of land management

HEADLINE: PAHRUMP ROUNDUP

AUTHOR : Keith Rogers

RUNDATE : Feb 27 1999 PAGE: 1A

PAHRUMP ROUNDUP

Increased, faster traffic between Las Vegas and a growing township was killing off a herd of wild burros, so the Bureau of Land Management captured the animals for adoption.

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

PAHRUMP -- With the blades of a helicopter whirling overhead, government cowboys rounded up 26 wild burros Friday about 10 miles north of this fast-growing

community to prevent additional accidents involving burros and motorists.

The emergency capture of this band of free-roaming burros was conducted by the Bureau of Land Management. Five of the animals had been struck and killed by vehicles since January as they crossed state Route 160 in the evening and early morning hours to reach and return from greener pastures.

While the helicopter flew low over the range at the foot of the Spring Mountains, helping wranglers on horseback corral the last "jack" burro, Billie Young, a volunteer for the National Wild Horse Association, said her organization approved of the gather.

"They had unfortunately got into an area where they were in a possible dangerous situation," she said.

Among the band was a 2-week-old foal that cowboys captured and hauled aboard a helicopter to a makeshift corral.

The roundup had been planned for today but a decision was made to conduct it Friday after the fifth burro was found dead along the road Wednesday, BLM wild horse specialist Gary McFadden said.

Fortunately, he said, no people have been injured in the accidents, but some cars have been damaged.

"This is a problem related to growth," McFadden said. "As Pahrump has grown, people have tended to speed up."

The burros will be put up for adoption to qualified residents in Pahrump or Las Vegas. If homes aren't found for any burros, they will be distributed through the BLM's wild horse facility at Palomino Valley near Reno, McFadden said.

He noted that a range fence, which was installed about 25 years ago to prevent wild horses and burros from wandering into town, has been breached by private property owners developing their land. Now there are too many gaps, which allow the burros easy access to sprinklers and lawns during hours of darkness.

Pahrump used to be a rural town with a grocery store, no stoplights and several thousand inhabitants. But during the past 2 1/2 decades it has turned into a township of more than 10,000 homes and mobile homes spread across 364 square miles, said Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Marge Taylor.

She said Pahrump's population was estimated at 3,000 in 1980 and 10,000 in 1990. Now it's roughly 30,000 and growing. It has a stoplight -- installed in 1994 -- and two supermarkets as well as fast-food restaurants.

Meanwhile, wild horses and burros in what's known as the Johnnie Herd Management Area in the Pahrump Valley have been trimmed steadily to keep them in check with range conditions, particularly during dry years.

At least one other emergency capture of horses and burros from the Johnnie herd was conducted during the past five years. In 1997 there were about 60 burros in the herd, but the number had increased to 85 before Friday's roundup, McFadden said.

BLM surveys in 1988 and 1992 set the size of the Spring Mountains herds at 240 horses and 120 burros, but a 1993 roundup reduced the number to 86 horses and 20 burros. The populations rebounded between 1993 and this year.

Another roundup of the Johnnie and Red Rock herds was conducted in 1996 because of poor range conditions. McFadden said that roundup was not a result of a traffic accident involving a burro that killed a Pahrump woman on Blue Diamond Road.

He said an underpass built in 1996 beneath state Route 160 has been "really effective" in preventing accidents involving wild horses and burros because the animals can travel from one side of the road to the other without endangering motorists.

In 1996, the BLM rounded up 9,365 wild horses and burros nationwide. More than half -- 5,884 -- came from Nevada, which is home to about 60 percent of the nation's wild horses.

McFadden said Friday's roundup cost the BLM about \$3,000 to hire contractor Dave Cattoor and his wrangler-helicopter team.

The burros will be available for adoption at Oliver Ranch in Red Rock Canyon by appointments, which can be arranged by calling McFadden at 647-5024.

notes=burros wild horse specialist gary mcfadden photos color jim laurie dave cattoor
jim hicks billie young national wild horse association adoption
catchline=PAHRUMP ROUNDUP
keywords = Keith Rogers Pahrump bureau of land management blm cowboys

HEADLINE: Wild horse advocates rally to protect herd of 71
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Jun 5 1999 PAGE: 1B

Wild horse advocates rally to protect herd of 71

Supporters plan to meet to oppose a federal agency's plan to reduce the number of animals roaming Red Rock.

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal

Wild horse enthusiasts have mounted a movement to preserve the remaining 71 wild horses that roam Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area.

A rally, set for 9 a.m. today, will focus on gathering signatures to present to the Bureau of Land Management in opposition to a capture that will be recommended in the draft Resource Management Plan that the BLM will release for public comment in July.

"We need to have the public involved and be aware of what is going on with the public lands," explained Laurie Howard, spokeswoman for the National Wild Horse Association, which is sponsoring the rally along with five other horse preservation and outdoor groups.

"If you eliminate any more of these horses, it's not going to be a viable herd," she said.

BLM officials, who claim the herd's population is 71, or 11 fewer than the horse groups' figure, say they intend to recommend that the herd be reduced to 56 to protect riparian areas from further damage by horses that visit them for food and water. The captured animals would be put up for adoption.

The rally, at the base of Mount Potosi in Cottonwood Valley on the south side of state Route 160 as it passes through the national conservation area, is expected to draw several hundred supporters, Howard said.

An orphaned filly from the Blue Diamond herd, now in the care of the wild horse groups, will be used to illustrate the dilemma faced by reducing the size of the Red Rock herd.

"We have more studs than mares," Howard said. "The population of mares has deceased, and there is more chance of mortality when they foal."

She said the horse groups have informed the BLM officials that wooden fences should not be used to guard riparian areas from wild horses and burros in the canyon because the animals can penetrate them.

The BLM also needs to develop more springs south of the canyon to support the horses, which each need up to 20 gallons per day to survive during hot, dry summers.

Dave Wolf, manager of the conservation area, said the BLM intends to develop more water sources for the Red Rock herd, but some of them will be placed beyond the canyon.

"It's too bad they're holding this rally before the plan is available for the public to review because they may be rallying against what they think the plan is going to say," Wolf said, noting, "Cottonwood Valley will always have horses and burros in it." Among the options in the plan -- one that the BLM is not recommending -- is to remove the entire herd.

"It's very likely in the short term some will be removed (from the canyon) but there will always be horses and burros in Red Rock for the public to view. It's just that they won't be where they are today," Wolf said.

notes=association Laurie Howard Bureau of Land Management Phillip Guerrero
catchline=Wild horse advocates rally to protect herd of 71

keywords = Keith Rogers wildhorses red rock canyon national conservation area

HEADLINE: Wild horses face relocation under BLM draft plan
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Jul 1 1999 PAGE: 1B

Wild horses face relocation under BLM draft plan

Advocates say they want 15 horses targeted for removal to remain right where they are.

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal

As wild horse enthusiasts looked on, Bureau of Land Management officials trotted out their draft plan Wednesday for guiding the use of resources in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, where 15 out of 71 wild horses are targeted for relocation.

The enthusiasts, most of whom belong to the 300-member National Wild Horse Association, said they object to the BLM's preferred alternative for managing the 71 wild horses and 61 burros that roam the canyon. They said they prefer the "no change" alternative to one that calls for keeping all the horses on the south side of state Route 160, leaving none on the north side, where more visitors go.

"I'm really worried about what's going to happen," said Mary Sue Kunz, who has photographed and tracked horses in the Red Rock Management Herd.

The herd management area overlaps parts of the 197,000-acre national conservation area.

Laurie Howard, spokeswoman for the National Wild Horse Association, said the association wants horses to remain where they are. It also wants the BLM to spend some of its budget to renovate springs and preserve the range to enhance it for horses, burros and other uses. "We'd like to see them put their money where their mouth is," she said.

Association Vice President Billie Young said, "We understand there are issues we need to deal with. We need a healthy range, but we think it's attainable with proper management."

Shari Warren, of the Rough Riders of Las Vegas, another wild horse advocacy group, said, "I'd like to see it as it is."

Dave Wolf, the BLM's conservation area manager, said it would take "overwhelming public comment or new technical or scientific information" to change the bureau's stance in the final General Management Plan, which is expected by December or January.

Wolf defended the preferred alternative, saying the horses, which are descendants of those turned loose by pioneers and early ranchers, damage riparian areas, pose safety issues for traffic on state Route 159, and might consume available spring water and vegetation for all wildlife during dry years.

Horse enthusiasts, however, said damage to spring and riparian areas is caused more by humans than by horses. People picnic near them and trample the vegetation, they said.

The draft plan, which Wolf previewed at a news briefing, will be available in a few days for a 90-day comment period. During that time, open houses have been scheduled for July 14, 15 and 17 at the BLM's district office on Vegas Drive, and on July 18 at the Red Rock Canyon Visitors Center.

A hearing on the environmental impacts of the proposed plan will be held in mid-August, he said.

In addition to removal and relocation -- or possible capture and adoption -- of the 15 wild horses north of state Route 160, the plan calls for building a 2-mile paved road from Sandstone Quarry to the Visitors Center. The route would be for people who don't want to travel the entire 13-mile scenic drive. It also would provide an alternative if the drive, which loops through the canyon, is closed because of weather

conditions.

A bike trail, connecting Sandstone Quarry to Willow Spring Picnic Area, also is proposed as a safety measure so that bicyclists can avoid steep grades and not be tempted to travel the wrong way on the scenic drive.

The plan designates hiking trails and areas for mountain biking, and also guides other recreational uses such as rock climbing.

notes=management plan wild horses burros removal protest association billie young laurie howard mary sue kunz dave wolf rough riders of las vegas shari warren trails rock climbing bike path

catchline=Wild horses face relocation under BLM draft plan

keywords = Keith Rogers Red Rock Canyon blm photo color scheid general

HEADLINE: Horses may get new home on range

AUTHOR : Keith Rogers

RUNDATE : Jul 26 1999 PAGE: 1B

Horses may get new home on range

A plan advises removal of 15 wild horses that use Red Rock Canyon's springs north of state Route 160.

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

Things are buzzing at Lone Grapevine Spring: butterflies, dragonflies, bees, wasps, even a few hummingbirds once in a while.

Tracks from hooved animals lead to this watering hole in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. They are mostly from wild horses and burros, but observers have seen bighorn sheep and a herd of mule deer roaming the high, Mojave Desert terrain that flanks the north side of state Route 160 and runs to the foot of the rocky cliffs west of state Route 159.

Tracks of another kind -- those from a mountain bike -- scar the side of a trail where it crosses a wash.

"That's probably one of the biggest control problems we have right now. They're so mobile," observed Conservation Area Manager Dave Wolf.

On this mid-July afternoon, when temperatures pushed 103 degrees, a family of three chestnut-colored wild horses wandered in the direction of a trough outside a wooden, rail fence that surrounds the head of the spring. That is where cool water trickles toward the valley floor.

A lush cover of clover, grasses, forbs and rushes grow knee-high and taller inside the fence. Some have been mashed down, probably by the weight of deer that hopped the fence and bedded on the damp, spongy mat of plants.

For the most part, except for the height and lushness of the bog, that's the way Lone Grapevine Spring has looked since September 1997, when Wolf decided to fence off the spring and install new pipe and a trough. An aging trough, a remnant of decades ago, remains inside the fence that wild horse enthusiasts volunteered to help build.

"The springs were not in proper, functioning condition, so a decision was made that we needed to do something to correct the problem," Wolf explained, describing how riparian experts from the bureau's Washington, D.C., office inspected Lone Grapevine and nearby Shovel and Mud springs No. 1 and No. 2, and saw their deteriorating conditions.

"This is what that other area could look like eventually," he said, referring to Shovel Spring, which also has a wooden fence around it, but has not been developed with pipes or a trough.

Shovel Spring, a green patch that stands out from the parched landscape of cholla and yucca, is not nearly as dense in vegetation as Lone Grapevine Spring and, instead of a spongy floor, water dribbles over a thin layer of claylike mud.

The solution to the problem, Wolf said, is contained in the conservation area's draft

management plan, which is scheduled for a public hearing Aug. 23.

To the dismay of wild horse enthusiasts, it recommends temporary removal of 15 wild horses that use the canyon's springs and range north of state Route 160, relocating them with the remaining 56 horses of the Red Rock herd that roams Cottonwood Valley, south of the highway.

The herd management area overlaps Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area.

A pipe from Lone Grapevine Spring would be routed 1 1/2 miles south to supply water for the increased south herd, Wolf said. An underpass that was built a few years ago would be blocked to limit the movement of the band of 15 so they can't return. Some animals eventually might have to be put up for adoption.

Under the plan's preferred alternative, parts of the existing Red Rock Herd Management Area would be eliminated, the 15 horses would be relocated temporarily -- maybe as long as 20 years -- and 50 burros north of state Route 160 would be relocated or put up for adoption. That leaves only 15 burros near Blue Diamond Hill and 10 south of state Route 160 in the southwest part of the herd management area -- not enough for a viable burro herd, according to BLM wild horse and burro specialist Gary McFadden.

Dave Tattum, the National Wild Horse Association's field director, said, "The biggest point we'd like to make is: Keep the herd management area the same."

"The type of management they're proposing is just as crazy as saying take all the bears out of Yosemite or the buffalo out of Yellowstone," he said.

According to the plan, the horses are their own worst enemy. They have continued to deteriorate the landscape of the range that surrounds the springs, a process that began decades ago, perhaps a century ago, when it was heavily grazed by cattle, horses and burros.

"Natural water sources are unreliable and do not produce sufficient water to maintain a viable population," the plan says. It notes that Lone Grapevine Spring, and Bird Spring -- which is one of two springs south of the highway -- "are the only two springs in the area used by wild horses ... that have reliable flows."

The effects of range deterioration have lingered, and now the ribs of some horses are beginning to show because they haven't had enough nor a proper mix of grasses and forbs on the range, according to BLM environmental protection specialist Jeffrey

Steinmetz.

"We're missing 30 percent of the grass component," he said.

In the case of one plant that's forage for the horses -- big galleta, a coarse, dense grass that resembles a shrub -- there's only about 35 pounds per acre in some areas near the springs, hardly enough, he said, to support one horse, let alone 15. Other plants, such as Indian rice grass are similarly lacking.

"You're looking at a site in deteriorated conditions," he said. "There are some signs of seedlings coming in. It's very limited, but I am encouraged by that."

Given a reprieve from grazing, Steinmetz said there is hope for returning the horses.

"After it comes back, it very possibly could support 15 horses. I can't say it is going to take three to five years," he said. "We definitely need to get some serious studies up."

Steinmetz said the BLM's knowledge base about the canyon's range conditions relies on studies that date back to about 1990.

But members of the National Wild Horse Association remain skeptical wild horses would be returned to the canyon, north of state Route 160.

The association's vice president, Billie Young, said the BLM's preliminary conclusions about the range conditions are not thoroughly backed by research. A study of another fenced off area in the canyon has not shown adequate improvement to the range, despite the fact horses and burros can't graze it.

"Where are they getting their stats? They don't have any hard evidence, any hard documentation," she said. "They have nothing to substantiate what they're concerned about."

Young said the National Wild Horse Association wants the BLM to establish what the number of wild horses should be to maintain a genetically viable herd under certain range conditions, a figure known as an "appropriate management level," or AML. That should have been done by the BLM staff before the draft General Management Plan was released.

"We believe there is sufficient water, but that we need updated systems, and that we need an AML established so that we have a herd number that's healthy and viable," she said.

The range conditions north of state Route 160 had not deteriorated too much until the highway was fenced several years ago, Young said, prohibiting the wild horse band from roaming south of the road in search of grazing areas.

"There are some vegetation issues that need to be dealt with on the north side, but we can put together a plan for keeping the horses and burros north of 160," she said.

BLM hydrologist Jack Norman said the range's deterioration stems from the demise of the springs. Plants that grow around the springs -- rushes and sedges -- stabilize the surface.

After thousands of years, miles of root systems have grown and died, forming an organic, spongelike surface. While the water source for the springs is snowmelt and runoff in the Spring Mountain cliffs that rim the canyon, the "sponge," Norman said, serves as a natural, water storage system that can hold and release water during extended dry periods.

While Lone Grapevine Spring appeared to have flourished from record storms that flooded parts of the Las Vegas Valley in early July, the heavy rainfall "blew out the mat" at Shovel Spring that, since 1997, was just beginning to form. "That's because there were no plants to protect it," he said.

Shovel Spring in the days after the July 8 storm, was putting out about a gallon per minute, he estimated. Of that, only about one-tenth of the water trickles beyond the fence that was installed 18 months ago.

In a few weeks, the spring will be dry, Norman said.

"I'd say in three to five years, it might be back to functioning conditions, but there's no way horses could occupy this spring again. There will be no vegetation. No holding capacity."

Young said Shovel Spring has never been a reliable water source and has never been considered for development to support wild horses and burros.

She said the National Wild Horse Association is skeptical about the temporary nature of the proposed horse and burro removal.

"We believe we can put together a plan that would satisfy the majority of the concerns, including keeping the horses and burros in that area," she said.

Wolf said the idea of removing horses and burros from a range temporarily is a different tact for the BLM.

"I know we're trying something new," he said.

HEADLINE: Hearing set on plan for wild horses
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Aug 21 1999 PAGE: 1B

Hearing set on plan for wild horses

Opponents hope to dissuade BLM officials from relocating animals from their range in the heart of Red Rock Canyon.

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal

Wild horse and burro enthusiasts opposing a plan to relocate 15 horses and most burros from the heart of Red Rock Canyon said they intend to persuade the Bureau of Land Management on Monday to keep the animals on their native part of the range.

Led by the National Wild Horse Association, the enthusiasts said they will use Monday's public hearing on the national conservation area's draft management plan to show shortcomings with the document. They are hoping they can garner support from other groups that use the canyon to convince BLM officials against a plan to temporarily remove the animals.

Monday's hearing is from 4 to 8:30 p.m. at the West Sahara Library, 9600 W. Sahara Ave.

"Their own biologist has stated they have not done the research to warrant the actions they are taking," said Billie Young, the association's vice president.

She cited a March 16 memo to BLM Recreation Planner Gene Arneson from the district's lead wildlife biologist, Sid Slone.

Slone's memo states, "Due to the potential controversy of whatever alternative is ultimately selected in this process, inferences should be based on hard data, not opinions and judgments. Though professional judgment may carry considerable weight at this time because hard data isn't currently available, a false impression should not be given to the public that our data is better than it truly is."

The proposed management plan recommends relocating a band of 15 horses that graze in the canyon's core area on the north side of state Route 160 to a part of the conservation area that's on the south side of the road, where most of the Red Rock herd roams.

In addition, about 50 burros on the north side of state Route 160 would be relocated or put up for adoption, leaving only 15 burros near Blue Diamond Hill and 10 south of state Route 160 in the southwest part of the herd management area.

The plan says overgrazing by the animals has deteriorated range conditions, leaving a scarce supply of the proper forbs and grasses for the horses and burros to eat. While there is enough spring water for the animals north of the road, water from there would have to be piped to the south side of the road, or another water source developed to support the addition of more animals.

"Eliminating the horses and burros is not the answer," Young said. "Currently we hold 13 percent of the state's burro population. After BLM implements their preferred plan we will have 2 percent, one step from elimination" of burros in the area.

BLM officials said they are compelled by land management standards to allow the overgrazed area to recover before horses and burros would be returned.

Arneson said it would take overwhelming support from the public, other than wild horse groups, to convince the bureau to adopt another alternative. "We've got to hear from other folks who are not just interested in horses," he said.

BLM environmental protection specialist Jeffrey Steinmetz said the range in the

canyon's core area is "very deteriorated" with only 3 percent galleta grass by dry weight when the figure should be between 30 percent and 50 percent.

Studies show, however, that a more nutritious forage for wild horses and burros -- Indian ricegrass -- has increased in plant numbers since 1990. In 1990, he noted, four plots out of 200 contained a ricegrass plant, while this year, 11 plots out of 200 contained a rice grass plant. A plot is 30 inches by 30 inches.

"We're dealing with small numbers," he said. "It did increase, but it was not statistically significant."

Young said the range's deterioration reflects the fact the horses' natural migration for grazing the range has been inhibited to keep them from crossing the road. An underpass that was specifically built to allow them to roam freely, also has been abused, deterring access by the horses.

She said the BLM has not considered all information about the range that has been compiled by the district's staff. For example, a project in the early 1990s to re-seed an area south of state Route 160 that had been disturbed during construction of the Kern River pipeline was not used in developing the draft management plan.

Although it was not a research project, BLM records show no impact on vegetation from horses outside of two areas that were fenced for the project to protect the seeded areas from grazing.

"Since there is no water in the exclosures and forage is as plentiful or more so outside the exclosure, no logical reason exists for the horses to voluntarily try and gain access," according to a May 6, 1993 memo to the area manager from former range management specialist Bob Stager and Gary McFadden, the district's wild horse specialist.

Arneson said information from the Kern River exclosure area, which became part of the national conservation area in 1994, wasn't considered for the draft management plan because the public focused its interest on studies in the canyon's core area, north of state Route 160.

notes=hearing wild horse association blm bureau of land management laurie howard
jeffrey steinmetz map color johnson burro red rock canyon billie young gene arneson
catchline=Hearing set on plan for wild horses
keywords = Keith Rogers Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area

HEADLINE: Speakers back wild horses
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Aug 24 1999 PAGE: 1B

Speakers back wild horses

A clear majority of 71 people sound off for wild horses and burros roaming Red Rock Canyon.

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal

During a hearing filled with passion for preserving wild horses and burros in the heart of Red Rock Canyon, speaker after speaker Monday night told Bureau of Land Management officials that they need to do a better job of managing the public's resources in the national conservation area.

A clear majority of the 71 speakers -- most of them wild horse enthusiasts or members of the National Wild Horse Association -- urged the BLM's Las Vegas District to reconsider its proposal for temporarily relocating a band of about 15 wild horses and most burros from the canyon's core area. BLM specialists claim overgrazing has taken its toll on the ecosystem in this area at the foot of the scenic cliffs west of Las Vegas.

North Las Vegas Craig Leets, who is president of the National Wild Horse Association, spoke on behalf of the 71 horses and more than 50 burros in the Red Rock Herd Management Area because, he said, the animals have no voice in the matter.

"If you were going to kick the mountain bikers, climbers or hikers out of Red Rock, don't you think you would get the most comments from that group? Since you are talking about horses and burros, who did you expect to have the most comments?" he asked.

"The BLM is totally missing the big picture when it comes to the educational potential of the horses and burros in Red Rock. They have a captive audience of thousands of people to educate about these animals and to show if an area is managed properly. We can all live and enjoy the resource together," he said.

Leets also called for a probe into permits issued to commercial horse riding stables that have been provided water and electricity by the BLM to operate in the canyon, while springs and range conditions have deteriorated.

"Is this the kind of management that the Red Rock (National) Conservation Area deserves? I think not," Leets said. During a break in the hearing, BLM officials reacted to what at times was a hostile environment.

Dave Wolf, the BLM's assistant field manager for recreation, denied Leets' allegation, saying all three riding stable operators that use the conservation area passed the full environmental and public review process. He declined to say if the speakers demonstrated the overwhelming support that would be necessary to change the bureau's position for relocating the 15 horses to the south side of state Route 160, where most of the herd roams.

"It would be irresponsible at this point to say one way or the other. We've certainly got a good indication of one group's position," Wolf said. He noted that not all comments have been fielded and the comment period will be extended to Oct. 31.

Many speakers said the bureau's preferred alternative for removing horses from the canyon until that part of the range can recover lacks a sound, scientific basis.

"Never have I seen a federal document call for such drastic change without data to back it up," said National Wild Horse Association member Dave Tattam, who has 16 years experience in reviewing wild horse and burro management plans.

BLM Field Manager Mike Dwyer later responded by saying, "That's a tough question to answer when it comes to scientific evidence. It's difficult to say how much is enough."

Some speakers said they feared removing wild horses and burros from the heart of the

canyon would strip the canyon of its legendary symbol, its charm and natural identity.

Only a few speakers, such as Howard Booth of the Sierra Club and John Hiatt, conservation chairman of the Red Rock Audubon Society, supported temporary relocation or permanent removal of the horses and burros.

"The health of the land is paramount here," Hiatt said. To recover from the damage caused by more than a century of grazing, he said, the number of horses must be reduced down "to a very low number, or zero."

Dwyer said the large turnout for the hearing "is an indication of how important Red Rock is to Las Vegas. It's clear people feel very passionate."

notes=photos color gurzinski blm red rock canyon hearing craig leets dave wolf tattam
dwyer booth hiatt blm overgrazing investigation relocation protests
catchline=Speakers back wild horses
keywords = wild horses, burros, bureau of land management, keith rogers

HEADLINE: TAKE ME HOME
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Sep 26 1999 PAGE: 1B

TAKE ME HOME

About 25 former members of the Red Rock wild horse herd will be auctioned Oct. 3 in Las Vegas.

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

Ellie used to be afraid of people until Billie Young, vice president of the National Wild Horse Association, started training her after the filly's mom was killed by a pickup this summer in Red Rock Canyon.

"To get her into the trailer the first time we had to scare her. She was definitely untouchable, terrified of people," Young said during a session at her corral last week on the northern outskirts of Las Vegas.

But thanks to weeks of patience and fond care, Ellie now takes to a halter, can be easily coaxed into a trailer, and, with a rope to lead her, will follow a rider on a saddled horse.

With a passing grade, the palomino with a faint, chocolate-colored coat is ready for adoption along with about 25 other wild horses that will be put up for sale to pre-qualified bidders at an Oct. 3 auction. In all there will be at least four trained or partially trained horses among them, including Ellie, who was born in February.

The National Wild Horse Association and the Bureau of Land Management hope volunteer training of horses such as Ellie will make the animals more adoptable in the Las Vegas Valley. Homes have been found for about 1,000 wild horses thinned from Nevada ranges during the past 15 years. Those horses have joined a growing, domestic population that is estimated at 45,000 horses in the valley, according to the association.

While the numbers of horses in the valley have nearly saturated available spaces to keep them, Young said, there are still people who would like to adopt wild horses but are afraid of their wildness and don't have the time or experience to tame them.

As for Ellie, the test case, Young said, "We're doing the basics to teach her to walk, trot and halt. We also need to be able to touch her legs, clip her hooves and clean them out in case a stone gets stuck.

"She has to be taught that she can't nibble or bite," she said, noting Ellie won't be ready for riding until she's more than 2 years old.

Bidding will open at \$125 at the auction, but Young believes Ellie is worth much more than that because of how quickly the animal adapted to training and because mustangs tend to be a stronger, healthier equine.

If she could, Young would like to keep Ellie at her ranch but she already has two full-grown horses -- Black and Decker -- "and I didn't name either one of them," she said, explaining their monikers weren't taken from the nationally known tool company. Young brought Black with her when she moved to Las Vegas eight years ago from Windsor, Ontario, and Decker came along later.

New horse owners should be prepared to shoulder costs for upkeep, including vaccinations, shoes and feed. One ton of grass or alfalfa costs about \$150, and Young's two horses together consume a ton of grass every six weeks.

Dave Tattam, a long-time National Wild Horse Association member and former president, said because of the saturation level in the Las Vegas Valley, the days of wild horse and burro adoptions with 100 head are over. However, he said the Pahrump Valley still has potential for adopting many horses.

On Aug. 6, the Bureau of Land Management successfully conducted its first, national wild horse adoption in which competitive bidding was conducted through satellite communications. Eighty-seven wild horses from Nevada were adopted out in 19 states.

"Response to the first nationally televised satellite auction was tremendous," BLM State Director Bob Abbey said. "We had bidders from all over the United States compete for pairs, geldings and studs."

How to adopt a wild horse

Review-Journal

Who: National Wild Horse Association in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management.

What: Wild horse and burro show, and adoption.

When: Oct. 2 , show and viewing beginning 8 a.m.

Oct. 3, adoption for pre-qualified bidders, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Where: Horseman's Park, 5800 E. Flamingo Road.

Why: To find homes for wild horses from crowded Nevada ranges.

To qualify in advance for the auction, call the BLM at 647-5000.

notes=bureau of land management red rock canyon national burros sidebar photos
color clint karlsen conservation area ellie horses burros palomino blm adoption
catchline=TAKE ME HOME
keywords = Keith Rogers national wild horse association billie young dave tattam

HEADLINE: Transit system suggested to lessen Red Rock traffic
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Nov 5 1999 PAGE: 1B

Transit system suggested to lessen Red Rock traffic

Park users say travel along a scenic loop will double within five years and octuple in 15 years.

Keith Rogers
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal

Fearing traffic jams on the 13-mile scenic drive through Red Rock Canyon, wild horse advocates and environmentalists want park planners to study a public transit system -- including a rail option -- to shuttle visitors to their destinations.

The groups, which don't always agree on how public lands should be used, said a transit system will be needed in the 197,000-acre national conservation area to preserve the park's fragile ecosystem and to protect people as well as horses, burros and other wildlife.

"The less damage done to the environment, the better it is," National Wild Horse Association Vice President Billie Young said Thursday.

"We're fearful of not being prepared for the increase," she said. "The range has to be first and foremost."

The transit study request for the park just west of Las Vegas hinges on a proposal by planners to pave a road that would be a shortcut from Sandstone Quarry to the visitors center. The planners hope it will reduce traffic on the remaining 10 miles of the one-way loop, provide an outlet for tired bicyclists and serve as an alternate route when other parts of the scenic drive are flooded.

Based on estimates that traffic will increase at the rate of 15 percent each year, the groups figure traffic will double within five years and be eight times the current level in 15 years, given that 1 million people visit Red Rock Canyon annually.

"Within five years, we expect that the scenic loop will be subject to frequent closures because of traffic that cannot be accommodated," according to the horse association's new alternative for managing the park, where visitors are charged an entrance fee.

"A public transit study needs to be started immediately. Alternate transit systems must be studied, including a variety of shuttle vehicles, tram options and even a rail option," says the association's "Alternative 6."

The new alternative was submitted Oct. 29 to the Bureau of Land Management at the close of the public comment period for the draft management plan for Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. It incorporates suggestions from the Sierra Club on how to manage traffic in the canyon with the backing of the club's California-Nevada Desert Committee and the Conservation Committee of the club's Southern Nevada Group.

Horse association President Craig Leets said the Sierra Club's suggestion was adopted because there is "a lot of common ground that the BLM hasn't addressed. It's an alternative we can live with," he said.

HEADLINE: BLM chief preaches planning
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Dec 14 1999 PAGE: 5B

BLM chief preaches planning

Horses, recreational enthusiasts can coexist, he says

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

Gearing up for a mountain bike ride Monday in the south end of Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, the head of the Bureau of Land Management said enthusiasts of the fast-growing, off-road sport can coexist with the canyon's wild horses and horseback riders as long as sound planning prevails.

With one caveat, recreational users of the popular public lands west of Las Vegas can exist in harmony with the hikers, mountain climbers and wildlife that attract more than 1 million visitors each year. The caveat: "If we manage it properly," said Tom Fry, acting national director of the Bureau of Land Management.

"At times we'll have to say this is a horse trail," explained Fry, who was wrapping up an outdoor recreation tour of Western public lands with the American Recreation Coalition and the Recreation Roundtable as a precursor to the Governor's Conference on Tourism at the Paris Hotel.

The Recreation Roundtable was organized in 1989 as a forum for executives in outdoor recreation and tourism to exchange ideas.

"Out here we're learning and we're growing with the population. Recreation is becoming a larger and larger part of our job," he said.

Fry went land-sailing over the weekend on the Ivanpah dry lake bed near the Nevada-California border. On Monday he donned climbing gear and ventured up a cliff in Red Rock Canyon before heading out on a mountain bike on Cottonwood Trail, off state Route 160. The area is not far from where the BLM intends to relocate some wild

horses from the core of Red Rock Canyon. But wild horse enthusiasts have suggested other plans be pursued to keep the small band of horses -- symbols of Western heritage -- in the canyon's core area.

Fry said many of the suggestions made by the public on how the canyon should be managed will be factored in to a plan that will be finalized early next year.

"One of the great things about the BLM is that we take that public input and make it part of our plans," he said.

Fry lauded the park's entrance fee program. Besides raising revenue that is spent within Red Rock Canyon, the program serves as a way to control use of the canyon, he said.

"The fee demonstration project is some sort of a way of not having these lands overrun every day," he said.

He said outdoor recreation enthusiasts want to be able to get away from the humdrum of urban life. "The kinds of places you have on public lands are the places where you can get lost," he noted.

Accompanying Fry on his mountain bike outing was Tim Blumenthal, executive director of the International Mountain Bicycling Association, an organization devoted to volunteer trail upkeep and promoting responsible mountain biking.

Blumenthal said the popularity of mountain biking has grown considerably in the last 15 years. In the mid-1980s, about 95 percent of the bikes used were so-called road bikes, such as 10-speeds. "Now 95 percent of the bikes are essentially mountain bikes," he said.

Many mountain bikers are attracted to Nevada, he said, because Nevada has expansive, undeveloped areas and public lands that provide new adventure for mountain bikers.

notes=red rock canyon wild horses off road sports coexist blumenthal
catchline=BLM chief preaches planning
keywords = keith rogers recreational roundtable blm photo john gurzinski

HEADLINE: Wild horses killed outside LV
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers

Wild horses killed outside LV

Federal authorities are investigating two shootings that have left six animals dead over the past month.

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

Investigators are searching for clues in two shooting sprees that left four wild horses and two burros dead in the Mount Charleston area northwest of Las Vegas.

Stench wafted from the spot Wednesday where federal authorities gathered evidence in the latest attacks on Nevada's wild horses. Based on the state of the decomposing carcasses, officials believe all but one of the animals had been dead about a month.

"It's very sickening because they don't appear to have died instantly. They suffered," said Melody Stehwien, a U.S. Forest Service law enforcement officer.

Investigators for the Forest Service and Las Vegas police, acting on tips, began a low-key probe Dec. 30 of the grisly scene off state Route 156 in the shadow of Mount Charleston. The first shootings, about four weeks ago, claimed three wild horses and two burros, and the second, a week ago, killed a black stallion that eventually staggered to its death.

Stehwien said law enforcement agencies have no suspects or motive for the felony crime, which, under the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act, carries a \$2,000 fine per animal and possible imprisonment.

Based on her observations, National Wild Horse Association spokeswoman Laurie Howard said there "is some real sickness involved" with the horse killers.

"I think it's definitely someone demented. They had a gun and they saw them out there. They were probably target shooting," Howard said.

But the horses and burros, she said, "were just out there grazing, doing what they do. They are not afraid of people. We have fought so hard to keep the wild horses as well as all wild animals in their natural state for all people to enjoy.

"The public has to decide. Are we going to band together and see that this is an unacceptable behavior? Are we going to have to keep people out of their environment, or are we going to have to remove (the horses)?"

The sight of the dead horses, some that collapsed gnashing their teeth in their last moments of pain, was reminiscent of the scene near Sparks on Dec. 29, 1998, where 34 free-roaming horses were found gunned down.

In that case, three men from the Reno area -- Anthony Merlino, 20, Darien Brock, 21, and Scott Brendle, 22 -- have been ordered to stand trial in Carson City District Court on charges of maiming or killing another person's animal. All three men have admitted they had guns while in the area where the horses were shot on Dec. 27, 1998. They maintain someone else shot the horses before they arrived.

Two of them, Brock and Brendle, were Marines at the time of the shootings but have since been given the administrative equivalent of a dishonorable or bad-conduct discharge. Brendle has said he shot one of the horses with a rifle and watched it buckle to the ground.

In the recent horse and burro slayings in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area, Stehwien said it appears two weapons were used. The horses were among some 50 that roam the area and the burros were part of a herd of 40. The animals ranged in age from 2 to 15 years old.

"The veterinarian said they all appeared to be very healthy horses," she said. She said some were shot more than once.

One of the burros, she said, had crawled up next to a Joshua tree to die, and some of the horses had pawed around the high-desert terrain struggling to live. The carcasses were found in three locations, all within about a half mile of each other.

The last multiple horse slaying in Southern Nevada was January 1991, when five horses were found shot in the southwest end of Red Rock Canyon.

Until the 1998 shootings near Reno, wild horse slayings had been on the decline since shooting sprees in 1987 and 1988 left 660 wild horses dead in rural areas around Lovelock and Battle Mountain.

Those cases are still open even though five people were arrested in connection with the crimes. A judge dismissed the cases partly because of lack of evidence.

Forest Service spokeswoman Betty Blodgett said authorities are seeking the public's help in solving the most recent shootings. Anyone with information can call investigators at 888-818-8177, or leave anonymous messages after 7 p.m. by calling 435-652-3119.

She said the Forest Service and the National Wild Horse Association are offering a reward of up to \$3,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for killing the horses and burros.

Wild horse and burro killings in Nevada since 1990

Review Journal

May 1990 -- 50 horses north of Gerlach

Jan. 1991 -- 5 horses Red Rock Canyon

Nov. 1991 -- 2 horses near Eureka

Feb. 1992 -- 2 burros south of Mina

July 1992 -- 2 burros east of Austin

Oct. 1992 -- 3 horses south of Caliente

Feb. 1993 -- 4 horses east of Panaca

April 1993 -- 4 horses east of Panaca

May 1993 -- 14 burros near Lake Mead

Nov. 1996 -- 3 horses in Washoe County

Dec. 1998 -- 34 horses near Sparks

Dec. 1999 -- 4 horses, 2 burros, in the Spring Mountains

TOTAL: 109 horses, 20 burros

Source: Review-Journal reports

notes=state Route 156 spring mountains humboldt toiyabe national photo color
gurzinski sidebar listing killings burros Lori howard National association Forest
Service betty blodgett melody stehwien
catchline=Wild horses killed outside LV
keywords = Keith Rogers wild horses shootings mount charleston lee canyon

HEADLINE: Removal of 13 wild horses from area angers group
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Jan 7 2000 PAGE: 1B

Removal of 13 wild horses from area angers group

The reward increases for information on the shootings of six animals in the Spring Mountains.

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

While the reward money for information on the shooting deaths of four wild horses and two burros in the Spring Mountains grew Thursday to \$6,000, wildlife activists said they are miffed at the National Park Service for rounding up a group of free-roaming horses from Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

The 13 wild horses, in Lake Mead's North Shore Road area, were gathered by government cowboys Tuesday without the knowledge of the National Wild Horse Association.

Federal officials now have sought the association's help in caring for the band at the Bureau of Land Management's Oliver Ranch in Red Rock Canyon.

"Why didn't they contact us well in advance to help with the removal?" asked National Wild Horse Association spokeswoman Laurie Howard.

"They never bothered to tell us, never bothered to inform us, but they want us out there to feed them," she said.

Kent Turner, chief of resources at Lake Mead National Recreation Area, said the 13 free-roaming horses were a safety hazard to travelers on North Shore Road, particularly near Echo Bay, Pinto Valley and the Bitter Springs area. They will be put up for adoption, he said.

"We do have several documented instances of horses being hit," he said. The horses were not native wildlife in the recreation area, he said, and not subject to the same protection afforded to wild horses and burros under the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act.

He said that a capture plan for horses and burros in Lake Mead National Recreation Area was approved in 1995 and that notice of the plan was sent to interested parties. But park officials are not required to inform the National Wild Horse Association of every capture. Three roundups have taken place since the plan took effect.

Howard questioned the logic behind the latest capture.

"They really don't want them there, and that's what this is all about," she said.

"Where's the proof? We believe they are a resource to Nevada and a resource to our

tourist population. This business about them not being indigenous is a bunch of nonsense."

Meanwhile, the U.S. Forest Service, led by a specialist from Utah, continued to analyze evidence from attacks in mid- to late December on four horses and two burros from the Wheeler Pass-Wallace Canyon herd.

It is one of three herds in the Mount Charleston area, some 30 miles northwest of Las Vegas. In all, the herds total 50 horses and 40 burros.

Forest Service spokeswoman Betty Blodgett said the Nevada Humane Society in Sparks has contributed \$2,000 toward the reward for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for killing the horses and burros. The Virginia Range Wildlife Protection Association in Virginia City donated \$1,000. The Forest Service and the National Wild Horse Association have contributed a combined \$3,000.

Melody Stehwien, a Forest Service law enforcement officer, said investigators have received several calls on the horse shootings and are pursuing one new lead in the case that was fielded Thursday.

notes=spring mountains lee canyon national park lake mead recreation area spring mountains burros removed photo color clint karlsen
catchline=Removal of 13 wild horses from area angers group
keywords = Keith Rogers wild horses burros national association laurie howard u s forest service betty blodgett

HEADLINE: More horses found dead north of city
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Jan 19 2000 PAGE: 1B

More horses found dead north of city

A tip leads searchers to an area off Route 156

near Mount Charleston where three carcasses were left.

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers

Review-Journal

Investigators acting on a tip have found the decomposed remains of three more wild horses that were probably shot to death in the Spring Mountains about the same time that four other horses and two burros were killed in December, U.S. Forest Service officials said Tuesday.

"We got a tip from someone who mentioned there was a colt out there and we knew we had not located a colt with those first horses. So, we went out and took a hike," explained Melody Stehwien, a Forest Service law enforcement officer.

She said the three carcasses were found during the weekend and confirmed Monday by a veterinarian to be ages 10 years, 4 years and 8 months.

They were found in the same vicinity as the other four horses off state Route 156 in the Mount Charleston area northwest of Las Vegas. The horses and the burros were within "one or two" miles of each other, Stehwien said.

The reward money for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the people responsible for killing the animals stands at \$17,250 with the latest donation -- \$1,000 -- offered by the Secret Witness program.

The animals are protected under the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act and by Nevada law. Last year, legislation sponsored by state Sens. Dina Titus, D-Las Vegas, and Randolph Townsend, R-Reno, was enacted by the Legislature making the killing of wild horses a felony.

Laurie Howard, spokeswoman for the National Wild Horse Association, said association members and wildlife enthusiasts are now even more upset than when investigators first began probing the scene off what's known as Lee Canyon highway on Dec. 30.

"Somebody got some real joy out of this unconscionable act," she said, describing the mind-set behind the crime as a "disturbing sickness."

According to Forest Service officials, investigators have received several phone calls "and are closely following up on possible leads."

In a statement, Tom Kuekes, district ranger for the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, expressed "our heartfelt thanks to the many people throughout Nevada and the rest of the country" who have offered help in solving the case.

"Our law enforcement officers are vigorously pursuing any and all leads, and we continue to enlist the public's assistance," Kuekes said.

The Forest Service is working in conjunction with agents from the Bureau of Land Management and Las Vegas police on the case. To contact the authorities call either Secret Witness, 385-5555, Forest Service investigations, (888) 818-8177, or leave anonymous messages after 7 p.m. at (435) 652-3119.

Meanwhile, the BLM will hold a citizens advisory board meeting Friday in Las Vegas to discuss wild horse issues including the slayings.

The daylong meeting of the Resource Advisory Council will begin at 8 a.m. at the BLM's Las Vegas field office on the southeast corner of Vegas and Decatur boulevards.

In addition to a presentation on the wild horse slayings by Kuekes, other topics for discussion include range conditions for the herds at Nellis Air Force Range and an update on the draft plan for managing Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area.

notes=burros dead killed

catchline=More horses found dead north of city

keywords = Keith Rogers wild horses spring mountains us forest service shootings

HEADLINE: BLM official: Wild horse, burro herds must be trimmed

AUTHOR : Keith Rogers

RUNDATE : Apr 1 2000 PAGE: 9B

BLM official: Wild horse, burro herds must be trimmed

Keith Rogers
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal

In order to keep an ecological balance between wild horses and burros and the ranges on which they live, the herds in Nevada will need to be trimmed by 5,222 animals next year, a federal land manager said Friday.

And, over the next decade, 36,746 of Nevada's free-roaming range animals -- wild horses and burros protected by a 1971 law -- must be rounded up to keep the constantly increasing population in check, according to the official, Lee Delaney, BLM group manager for Wild Horse and Burro Management.

"Our goal is to get down to the appropriate management level in four years. When we do that, we will have living legends in balance with the land," he said in reference to the wild horses.

Out of 10 Western states where the nation's wild horses and burros roam, Nevada's herds represent about half of the total 50,631 animals, according to BLM figures. With an annual increase from reproduction of about 20 percent, nationwide wild horses and burros exceed what's called the "appropriate management level" by 23,252 animals.

In order to reduce the herds, the BLM's 10-year strategy is to take 12,855 animals off the ranges nationwide in the first year, and decrease the number removed to 4,500 by the sixth year, and continue to hold that level through the remainder of the program.

From the 12,855 animals harvested in the first year, most of them -- 8,500 -- will be put up for adoption, Delaney said.

After the meeting, officials with the National Wild Horse Association said they doubt

the basis for the strategy and accuracy of the numbers.

They echoed one commission member, rancher Gracian Uhalde, who said he was concerned that appropriate levels to manage wild horses and burros have not been set for about one-third of Nevada's herds.

The BLM claims wild horse and burro populations exceed appropriate management levels in 159 out of 192 herds nationwide.

But National Wild Horse Association Vice President Billie Young wonders how that can be if 30 percent of the herd areas in Nevada -- the state with the most wild horses and burros -- haven't established what the appropriate management level should be.

"That's something we've been stressing," she said. "They've been behind. These need to be updated, regardless if it's more funding or whatever the problem is."

"Locally we've got one horse and burro expert who covers over 2 million acres," she noted.

A BLM spokeswoman said some of the herd management levels that haven't been set, including the one for some 70 horses and 50 burros in and around Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, are contingent on plans soon to be completed to manage the various conservation areas.

Laurie Howard, spokeswoman for the National Wild Horse Association, said, however, there are questions about whether lowering the number of horses and burros will leave genetically viable herds in Red Rock Canyon and the sanctuary of Nellis Air Force Range, which is off-limits to the public.

Raymond Yowell, chief of the Western Shoshone National Council, offered another plan, one he said is balanced to protect horses and the land; one that would be self-sustaining instead of requiring millions of dollars per year, as does the BLM's horse and burro program nationwide.

"We have a lot of respect for the land and everything that's on it. It should be in proper balance at all times," Yowell said.

"In ancient times we only took renewable resources off the land. That is still our belief," he said.

An outline of the Western Shoshone plan calls for a 10-year contract in which

Western Shoshones would take over for the BLM and conduct annual roundups in their homeland, a large swath of Nevada, removing excess older horses and yearling colts to meet an established level. Those horses would become property of the Western Shoshone government.

Commission Chairman Frank Cassas told Yowell that because of legalities involving the federal government, it would be premature for the commission to act on the Shoshone plan.

notes=western shoshone chief raymond yowell ian zabarte blm wild horse burro herds trimmed delaney billie young laurie howard cassas shoshone plan
catchline=BLM official: Wild horse, burro herds must be trimmed
keywords = Keith Rogers wild horses commission for the preservation of

HEADLINE: New plan in works to handle horses, burros on Nellis range
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Apr 19 2000 PAGE: 4B

New plan in works to handle horses, burros on Nellis range

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal

Three federal agencies, led by the Bureau of Land Management, will field ideas next month on how to manage public resources such as wild horses on Nellis Air Force Range.

The northwest part of the 3-million-acre aerial-combat training range is home to hundreds of wild horses, many of which roam what is called the Nevada Wild Horse Range.

Part of the wild horse range overlaps the boundary of the Nevada Test Site, the Energy Department's nuclear weapons proving grounds, which is not part of Nellis Air Force Range.

Jeffrey Steinmetz, an environmental protection specialist for the BLM, said management of horses and burros on the Nellis range is a key issue that will need to be addressed.

"We've got to open this up to the public and find out what their ideas are," he said.

He is leading the planning effort with the Air Force and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

A timetable sets a decision on the plan by November 2001.

The new Resource Management Plan will replace one that was devised in 1992.

The new plan was called for in a 1999 law that withdrew Nellis Air Force Range from public use for 20 years to allow the Defense Department to practice bombing maneuvers.

The law allows the Interior Department to manage all nonmilitary aspects associated with the Nellis range, including the Desert National Wildlife Range, which overlaps the southern part of the Nellis Air Force Range.

Meetings on the plan have been scheduled 3 to 5 p.m. May 1 at the Beatty Community Center in Beatty; 7 to 9 p.m. May 1 at the Tonopah Convention Center in Tonopah; 7 to 9 p.m. May 2 at the Ruud Community Center in Pahrump; 7 to 9 p.m. May 3 at the community center in Amargosa Valley; 7 to 9 p.m. May 4 at New Alamo High School in Alamo; and 7 to 9 p.m. May 5 at the BLM field office in Las Vegas, 4765 W. Vegas Drive.

notes=Jeffrey Steinmetz resources plan wild horses nevada test site blm manage public resources

catchline=New plan in works to handle horses, burros on Nellis range

keywords = Keith Rogers Nellis Air Force Range Bureau of Land Management

HEADLINE: Some Red Rock burros to be moved because of accidents
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Jul 17 2000 PAGE: 1B

Some Red Rock burros to be moved because of accidents

The deaths of four animals during the past month prompt officials to take precautions.

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal

The scene is commonplace on state Route 159 in Red Rock Canyon: Tourists see a band of burros milling around the side of the road. They stop their car and get out, hoping to pose for photographs with the animals.

The burros beg for handouts, a conditioned response from past generations that often garners the protected animals such treats as Twinkies, Doritos, marshmallows.

But in the past month, those friendly instincts led four burros to their deaths, killed at night by motorists whizzing by on the 60-mph winding road.

No people have been injured in the accidents. But for safety reasons and because of dry range conditions, public lands officials will begin rounding up many of the burros in August, sending some to adoption centers and others to remote parts of the herd management area.

Wild horse specialist Gary McFadden of the Bureau of Land Management said the dry spell already had made it necessary to remove a couple dozen of the 70 burros and 70

horses in the Red Rock area. The safety issue merely heightens the need to trim the herd, he said.

Reducing the number of burros won't reduce their appeal to visitors who normally see such animals in zoos. On Thursday -- three days after the last burro was killed -- Czeslawa and Julian Bialek of Des Plaines, Ill., pulled their car over to pose with the hungry creatures.

"People need to watch it," Czeslawa Bialek said, as cars blew past.

The Bialeks and their friends, Wanda and Mitchell Wilk, wouldn't risk the \$50 fine for feeding the animals. After taking a picture, they got back in their car and merged back onto the road, where the speed limit was 45 mph until it was raised in February.

Enough tourists do feed the burros, however, that some of the animals remain on the side of the road or return after nightfall. All four of the burros struck by cars in the past month died at night.

According to the National Wild Horse Association, that stretch of the highway needs fences and underpasses built to ensure safe passage of the animals.

"We wouldn't be having this discussion if the fencing was up with underpasses," said the group's spokeswoman, Laurie Howard.

While much of the Red Rock Canyon corridor is lined with barbed-wire fencing, there are several openings where burros and horses can reach the roadside. To keep the animals out of harm's way, McFadden said, fencing complete with cattle guards and even an underpass for the animals might be necessary.

The problem is that the Nevada Department of Transportation lacks documentation of a safety hazard to justify a new fence.

Kelly Anrig, the department's assistant chief safety engineer, says his records show only four burros have been killed along that stretch of the road in the past three years, "which obviously is not correct."

"What's going to happen is Gary McFadden is going to send me that information (about the recently killed burros) then we can get it in a database and evaluate it," Anrig said. "Hopefully we'll get better data and show they have a problem."

The BLM, which charges fees to visit the national conservation area, and the

Department of Transportation could share the costs of fencing, officials from both agencies said.

But Red Rock manager Greg Gnesios said that even with new fencing, drivers need to be more aware of wildlife when driving at night.

"It isn't just horses or burros; they could hit a deer or a bobcat," he said.

notes=laurie howard national wild horse association burros horses map
johnsonczeslawa bialek wanda wilk julian mitchell des plains ill chicago
catchline=Some Red Rock burros to be moved because of accidents
keywords = Keith Rogers red rock canyon photos gurzinski killed safety greg gnesios
gary mcfadden

HEADLINE: BAND ON THE RUN
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Jul 30 2000 PAGE: 1b

BAND ON THE RUN

Some elusive wild horses don't cotton to being corralled even though it's for their own good.

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal
..archivephotocaption..

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal

With helicopter blades whirling close overhead, a band of wild horses kept government cowboys at bay for an hour Saturday during an emergency roundup near Red Rock Canyon to save the animals from dying of thirst and starvation.

"We have some horses in deteriorating condition," explained Billie Young, president of the National Wild Horse Association.

"It's apparent if we don't act now, we will have dead horses," she said as the roundup got under way Saturday morning with the temperature already pushing 100 degrees.

After the band of six refused to enter a makeshift corral where more than a dozen already had been captured, cowboys on horseback chased them across the rugged terrain, seven miles south of state Route 160, and roped them one by one.

Only the band's leader, a palomino stallion, managed to evade the posse. It will be left to rejuvenate the herd.

Jim Hicks, who piloted the Bell helicopter for the government contractor, Utah-based Cattoor Livestock Roundup, said the band was a stubborn bunch because the horses have become accustomed to people and vehicles and couldn't be scared into the corral.

"You're going to run into those now and then," said Hicks, a Vietnam War pilot who sashayed the craft back and forth near the entrance of a long, burlap chute.

At times, the helicopter's skids were within an arm's reach of the horses, which appeared to dare him to come closer.

Despite the chase over miles of rocky desert dotted with sage bushes and Joshua trees, Hicks said the evasive stud horse "was still fresh."

"A tired wild horse will outrun a good saddle horse any day," he noted.

In all, about 30 wild horses were rounded up Saturday near Tunnel Spring while an audience of mountain bikers and media crews watched from a hillside.

Bureau of Land Management officials, who supervised the roundup with help from the horse association, said some of the older horses will be returned to the Red Rock Herd Management Area, while younger ones will be put up for adoption Oct. 8 in Las Vegas.

Officials don't think a few of the older horses can survive on the range. Those animals will be hauled to a long-term care facility in Oklahoma, BLM wild horse specialist Gary McFadden said.

BLM spokesman Phillip Guerrero said a similar roundup will be conducted today north of state Route 160 in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. Then, on Monday, cowboys will gather about 40 burros along state Route 159, where motorists have struck and killed four in recent weeks. People illegally feeding the burros have conditioned them to stand on the highway's shoulder or even on the road, where they pose a hazard to drivers at night.

Despite the safety considerations, BLM officials said the dry spell -- a week away from breaking the 150-day record of no measurable precipitation set in 1959 -- has caused at least two springs to dry up.

Coupled with sparse vegetation, the death toll of horses alone could have totaled 50 had the BLM and volunteers from the horse association and rural communities not refilled troughs near the springs with thousands of gallons of water hauled in by trucks every two weeks since the beginning of May.

Guerrero said when finished, the emergency roundup will cost about \$30,640. "That's a small price to pay to keep these horses from dying," he said.

notes=helicopter stubborn red rock cowboys route 160 map color johnson
catchline=BAND ON THE RUN
keywords = keith rogers photo color john gurzinski wild horses roundup burros
coralling

HEADLINE: Adoptions scheduled for horses, burros
AUTHOR : Keith Rogers
RUNDATE : Oct 6 2000 PAGE: 4B

Adoptions scheduled for horses, burros

Animals gathered because of dry conditions in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation

Area

By KEITH ROGERS

REVIEW-JOURNAL

..archivephotocaption..

Wild horses and burros that government cowboys captured this summer from Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area will be put up for adoption Sunday at Horseman's Park.

Bureau of Land Management wild horse specialist Gary McFadden said 25 animals, including 16 horses from the Red Rock Herd Management Area and four taken from Nellis Air Force Range, will go to the highest qualified bidder.

The horses were captured in late July because a dry spell left Southern Nevada ranges with dwindling food and water supplies.

Two dozen burros that roamed public land along a stretch of state Route 159 in the canyon were removed after four were killed within a month by nighttime motorists. The BLM and the state Department of Transportation have blamed the safety hazard on a lack of fencing.

Since mid-September, four more have been killed at night by drivers, including two this week, McFadden said. McFadden didn't know whether any of the dead burros were ones that had been captured and then released in another part of the canyon.

The 20 horses, one adult burro and four young burros will be at Horseman's Park at the end of East Flamingo Road all day Saturday during the Wild Horse and Burro Show sponsored by the National Wild Horse Association.

On Sunday, pre-approved adopters can view the animals beginning at 8 a.m. and bid between 9 and 10 a.m.

notes=bureau of land management gary mcfadden blm adoption red rock photo
gurzinski

catchline=Adoptions scheduled for horses, burros

keywords = Keith Rogers las vegas national wild horses association burros adoption
