

Carson National Forest

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News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wild horse gathering begins, preadoptions underway

El Rito, New Mexico, November 30, 2007—Carson National Forest officials at the El Rito District are preparing to adopt out 22 wild horses that have been gathered since November 5.

The El Rito Ranger District, located off NM 554 roughly between Abiquiu and Ojo Caliente, is accepting applications for pre-adoptions beginning December 1. The horses are available for viewing at the El Rito District by appointment Monday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Adoptions will take place on December 14 and 15.

The horses are protected under the Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971. The horses have been gathered from the Jarita Mesa Wildhorse Territory by Mount Taylor Mustangs using a low-stress baiting method to meet resource guidelines established in a 2002 environmental assessment. The environmental analysis determined that range conditions can support between 20 to 70 horses for the territory.

Unfortunately, the recent gathering was marred by two deaths of horses. One horse died Monday, November 26 when it ran head first into a corral panel at the gathering site that had frozen stiff in the cold weather. The horse died instantly of a broken neck. The other horse death was originally thought to be from a gunshot, when caretakers noticed a neck wound on Monday, November 26. A veterinarian was contacted and came to treat the horse with antibiotics and fluids. On Wednesday, the horse was transported to Rincon Blanco Veterinarian Clinic. The veterinarian recommended euthanasia due to severe internal infection caused likely by a fall and not a gunshot.

“We are very saddened by the death of the horses,” District Ranger Diana Trujillo said. “We hold these creatures very close to our hearts. While we take every precaution to ensure their safety, we cannot help but take it very personally when they die.”

The horse gathering was suspended after the deaths to review safety procedures and due to impending weather.

Since 2003, the Carson National Forest has made extensive modifications to the gathering procedures to have less stress on the horses. In the last four years, there have been three deaths and more than 100 horses gathered.

Horses are made available for adoption on a first-come, first-served basis. Qualified individuals can select a horse and complete an adoption application. The Forest Service will review the adoption materials with potential adopters and verify adopters meet requirements, including facilities needed to care for a horse. Upon application approval, adopters will be able to take their horse home. The adoption fee for each wild horse is \$125. Though the adoption fee may seem minimal, the cost of caring for a wild horse is comparable to caring for a domestic horse and should be considered.

In order to adopt a horse, prospective owners must be at least 18 years of age. Parents or guardians may adopt a wild horse and allow younger family members to care for the animal. Potential adopters also must have no prior conviction for inhumane treatment of animals or for violations of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act; demonstrate that there are facilities for adequate food and water, and provide proof that humane care does exist for the number of horses requested; and indicate that the property is in the United States.

Further information on adoption requirements and adoption applications are available on the Carson National Forest Web site at www.fs.fed.us/r3/carson or at the El Rito Ranger District office. Photos of the horses are posted on the Carson Web site. To make an appointment to see a horse, call the El Rito Ranger Station at 505-581-4554.

