

2020
SPRING
NEWSLETTER

International Society for the Protection of Mustangs & Burros



Spirit of the Ancients

WILD HORSE & BURRO DIARY

A Publication of the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros

The Oldest Wild Horse and Burro Organization in the United States

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PO Box 435, Rapid City, SD 57709

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President's **REPORT**

By Karen A. Sussman

The importance of supporting "your" horses and ISPMB is now more critical than ever before. We know there are many groups out there with worthy causes to support; however, it is ISPMB who has the statistics to save all of America's wild horses and burros. We CAN dispel BLM's myth that populations double every four years.

We need your financial support to save Americas wild horses!

There is no organization that has information on population growth of herds that remained free and undisturbed like ISPMB has on the wild herds we managed. The following is an example of our work:

- BLM's assertion that herds double every four years has not been the case at ISPMB. No one has data on wild horses that have been left alone, with the exception of providing feed for them, except ISPMB. However, using BLM's counting method, the 70 horses from White Sands that we started with in 1999 would have grown to 1,400 horses by 2016. Our count in 2016 was 265. Looking at the Gila herd, in which 31 horses came to ISPMB in 2000, there would have been 496 in 2016, according to BLM counts, and our count was 135 animals. The key to healthy management of herds should be "hands off." As the law clearly states: "minimal feasible management." Yet, the BLM continually destroys the family bands through disruption from frequent gathers. It is the BLM's own mismanagement that is destroying the true nature of wild horses.

What is it going to take to stop this genocide on America's wild horses and burros? Your continued contributions will make a difference and for that we are eternally grateful. Help us win the misinformation campaign waged against wild horses and burros in our country. Help us stop the BLM and FS assault on "the last living symbols of the American West," our heritage species, the wild horses and burros.



Why PZP and Wild Horses Don't Belong Together

Giving birth control to wild horses will contribute to their eventual demise on public lands

By Craig C. Downer, Wildlife Ecologist

Many serious damaging effects upon wild horses and burros are caused by PZP (Porcine Zona Pellucida) administration. These effects pertain both to the mares who are injected with this inoculation, either manually when held captive or remotely by darting with a rifle in the field aimed at the hip. These effects have been documented and analyzed by professional biologists; and many ordinary people have also observed and reported them.

An honest reading of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (WFHBA) should reveal how out-of-tune PZP interference is, for it violates the most intimate parts of mares and causes an aftermath of stress, anguish and social disruption. It should be considered antithetical to this law's core intent. Basically, PZP interference with the natural lives of the wild horses (or wild burros) is a form of domestication that contradicts the WFHBA, which mandates "minimum feasible management" and that the horses and burros be allowed to become "integral" parts of the public lands' ecosystem where they attain a "thriving natural ecological balance." To those who hold the noble purpose of this law in high esteem, what has and continues to happen is both a shame and a disgrace to America. This is an intolerable situation that needs to be quickly corrected.

Some of the most alarming effects of PZP are:

(1) The undermining of the immune systems of the wild horses over the generations. This sets them up for decline and die-out due to disease, inclement weather or other stressful situations.

Among these Onaqui wild horses mutually grooming and grazing is a branded mare showing she has been inoculated with PZP.

(2) The serious stress and discontent experienced by the PZPed mares in not being able to complete their natural reproductive life cycles. This leads to their frustrated rejection of stallion after stallion.

(3) The disruption of the social bands and their hierarchies because of the above, which throws both the individual bands and, consequently, entire herds into disarray. This breakdown of education passed from the older stallions and mares to their progeny affects their ability to survive in the long-term.

(4) The lack of customary reproductive inhibition of younger animals by older horses, as occurs in mature and natural horse societies, throws the social order into disarray and negatively affects the survival ability of the horses. (The same applies to burros.)

(5) The out-of-season, deformed and/or still-born (i.e., dead) foals documented to be born (or nearly) from those mares who are coming off of PZP. This has been reported by scientists as well as ordinary concerned citizens. And the list goes on.

Many of the biologists who have observed the detrimental effects of PZP have warned of these and other adverse effects, usually in a non-emotional, objective and professional way. But we should not confuse their intellectual style with a lack of concern and even alarm.

THERE'S MORE TO KNOW

See next page for more on *Why PZP and Wild Horses Don't Belong Together...*

One recent article that was co-authored by five leading equine biologists has this to say: "Careful consideration to the frequency of PZP treatment is important to maintaining more naturally functioning populations; the ability to manage populations adaptively may be compromised if females are kept subfertile for extended periods of time." Also: "...the use of PZP with small populations and/or those of conservation concern should be approached with caution (Ransom et al., 2014)." And again also: "...the fact that mares do not easily return to fertility after the cessation of treatment could limit the ability of populations to rebound in the face of stochastic declines." (Nuñez, C.M.V. et al. 2017. Lingering effects of contraception management on feral mare (*Equus caballus*) fertility and social behavior. Conservation Physiology [March, 2017]. Link: <https://researchgate.net/316846999>.)

PZP can seriously compromise the natural adaptation of wild horses to each particular ecosystem, which would be a subversion of WFHBA's true intent and purpose. Clearly, when we humans thwart the ability of the horses to naturally adapt to their surroundings, and when we replace natural selection with artificial selection by humans concerning which individuals survive and procreate, we are domesticating these horses and creating a disharmonious situation. And this is contrary to the WFHBA.

As I reviewed the wild horse population and removal statistics from BLM in their report of March 1, 2019 (www.blm.gov), it became increasingly obvious that the very wild horse herds that have been most heavily PZPed and for the longest durations are still being rounded up and taking drastic cuts in their numbers. The following are but a few of the many herds throughout the West (as elsewhere) whose future on Earth is being jeopardized by PZP injection and other crude means that are heavy on "management" and lacking on "protection and preservation":

Nevada's Pine Nut Mountain Herd

In Nevada, a herd both near and dear to me consists of the ever-fascinating Pine Nut Mountain wild horses. But it has just been "gutted" by BLM contractors – drastically reduced by 575 in spite of several years of PZPing the mares. As the studies of equine geneticist Dr. Gus Cothran reveal, these preserve a unique mixture of significant Spanish Mustang as well as other breeds, such as the shorter ponies, including Shetland, used in pulling out ore carts

from mining tunnels in the Virginia Range just to the north, where the world-famous Comstock Lode occurred.

Pine Nuts' original legal Herd Area (HA) is: 251,792 acres, but it has been reduced to 104,316 Herd-Management-Area (HMA) acres. The BLM has set an arbitrary and capricious Appropriate Management Level (AML) of 118 to 179, for a mean of 148. It is critical to understand that this setting of AML is illegal under the Act. In my professional opinion as a biologist, by reducing the population to 118 and continuing heavy PZP darting of the mares here, this herd would become seriously endangered. At the mean AML of 148 horses, there would be 705 HMA-acres and 1,701 original HA-acres per individual horse. And, yet, Section 2 (c) of the WFHBA clearly states that the legal Herd Areas shall be "devoted principally" to the wild horses, or wild burros, NOT to ranchers and their livestock, miners, energy developers, off-highway vehicle (OHV) users (very serious in the Pine Nuts), big-game hunters, loggers, wood cutters, etc. Yet this is precisely what continues to happen. Some have called this a "travesty of justice" and I would certainly agree.

Montana's Pryor Mountain Herd

Another heavily PZPed and cherished wild horse herd with a high degree of Spanish Mustang is the Pryor Mountain herd in the state of Montana. This is the last remaining of seven original 1971 BLM herds, all of which should have been given protection by the WFHBA. Six of these have simply been zeroed-out, though they are still legal Herd Areas, but totally victimized ones because of unscrupulous, uncaring and often mendacious people.



A wild horse band far in the northern Pine Nut Mountain Herd Management Area



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Small band of Pine Nut wild horses

The Pryor Mountain itself was declared a “national wild horse range” several years before the December 1971 passage of the WFHBA. It contains 44,920 original HA-acres, but sometime after 2003, when I visited the herd, this was cut to only 35,640 HMA-acres by BLM’s Billings Field Office, Montana.

These beautiful, highland meadows benefited from the horses, as they are natural enrichers of soils and dispersers of germinable seeds of a great variety, including native species. But USFS officials have sided with those who target the horse as being non-native to North America, though nothing could be further from the truth. The horse species’ greater story upon Earth is that they are ancient and deeply rooted natives in North America, where they have been present for millions of years. As a consequence, their restoration as truly genetically viable populations in truly long-term viable habitats actually helps restore hundreds, even thousands, of plant and animal species with which they have co-evolved for literally thousands of generations.

It was my privilege to visit this herd in June, 2003, back when it still occupied the highland meadows. I even witnessed the famous cremelo stallion known as “Cloud” and his lively band. The meadows near where they stood were lush and thriving and, to a large degree, due to mutualistic contributions made by these naturally living horses. I also observed a puma chasing his prey (which includes horses but in this case was a deer) at quite a near distance at the edge of a pine forest. I could sense the electricity of this age-old drama in the very air!

Besides one brief visit in early 2015, later in June, 2016, I returned to observe this herd and do an ecological evaluation of its habitat.

This herd had since been heavily PZPed and was not nearly as lively nor in as exuberant a state of health as before. To me, they were clearly into the process of being domesticated – which is contrary to the true and core intent of the WFHBA.

The egregiously low illegal AML for this nationally and internationally cherished herd appears to have been dictated by a local rancher. It goes from a low of 90 to a high of 120, with a mean of only 105 wild horses. This means that BLM is only allowing one individual horse for every 428 acres of original HA land and every 339 reduced-HMA acres.

Given how much more rainfall and how much more productive the Pryor Mountain ecosystem is compared to so many of the more arid regions of the West, such arbitrary assignments constitute an outrageous injustice to these naturally living horses. They possess a right to not only live but to thrive here, but given the intensive PZPing of the mares, they are being set up for inbreeding and a decline of the requisite natural vigor that it takes to survive over the generations.

BLM currently reports there are approximately 162 wild horses in the Pryors; and they have been repeatedly trying to again reduce their numbers to the abysmally low-level AML. Also, my inspection of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR) indicated considerable invasion of the sanctuary by cattle, especially along the borders, and too much disruption of the habitat by OHVers. The PMWHR is visited by a steady stream of ecotourists throughout the year; and there is even a wild horse tour operation out of the Mustang Center located in Lovell, Wyoming. My impression is that these uniquely beautiful and historic, largely Spanish Colonial Mustangs (related to the Crow Native American

herds and possibly to the Lewis & Clark expedition) are being cheated of their rightful land and resources. They deserve more ample space and freedom and must not be rendered into a frustrated, mere token remnant of what they once were.

But the good news is that this deplorable and sick situation need not continue. For, if only the WFHBA were honestly and caringly enforced, these wonderful wild horses could be restored to a population level that is commensurate with the wholesome ecological niche that exists for them in this awesome mountain range (in and around which are found horse fossils dating from centuries to millennia or even millions of years before civilized Europeans arrived here, thus proving the horse's preexisting niche).

Utah's Onaqui Mountain Herd

Another popular though heavily PZPed wild horse herd occurs on Utah BLM land west of Salt Lake City. This is the pulchritudinous and diverse Onaqui Mountain herd which I visited in mid-June 2019. Nearly all the mares had been PZPed and bore disfiguring brands on their hips.

The original HA contains 507,681 acres but the wild-horse-occupied area has been reduced to 240,153 HMA-acres and assigned an unjustly low AML of between 121 and 210 for a mean of 166 individuals. So, at the mean there are a whopping 3,058 HA-acres per individual horse and 1,447 HMA-acres per individual horse!

The most recent BLM roundup of the internationally famous Onaqui mustangs occurred September 19, 2019, and resulted in the removal of 241 wild horses. Clearly the lesson here is that heavy PZPing does not guarantee that our precious and scant remaining wild horses shall be left in peace to occupy their rightful habitat. Rather, this habitat continues to be largely monopolized by ranchers' livestock. Two of the Onaqui mares who were recently rounded up died from roundup-related injuries, in spite of the ongoing, intensive mare-PZPing program in this large HMA.

And if you think the situation here is serious, consider what the Burns' BLM office did to the Warm Springs wild horses and wild burros within their 499,457-acre HMA. They recently rounded up nearly all of the approximate 1,000 horses and burros here. They then reported there were 30 wild horses and 30 wild burros left in this immense area, which is tightly fenced and cross-fenced to accommodate a true monopoly by cattle ranchers.

Though 150 is often used by BLM as being minimally viable, an objective estimate by the Equid Specialist Group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (to which I belong) is 2,500 individuals for the long-term survival of wild equid species (Duncan, Patrick. 1992. Zebras, Asses, and Horses: An Action Plan ... IUCN SSC, ESG. Gland, Swit).

The captured wild horses and burros languish in the Hines BLM Holding Corrals. Ever since the massive roundup, BLM officials have been continually trying to get approval to do gruesome and unsanitary in-holding and in-field spayings (called ovariectomies by colpotomy), geldings and other Frankensteinian procedures that are totally contrary to the true spirit and intent of the WFHBA. PZP also appears to be a part of their reprehensible plan.

Another herd of heavily PZPed wild horses I have visited occurs in Wyoming BLM's McCullough Peaks HMA. These have legal right to 120,412 acres, but have been assigned what should be considered an illegal AML of only 70 to 140, for a mean of, again, only 105. This outrageous assignment prevents their genetic viability and does not allow these special mustangs to fill their legal and natural niche. Currently reported to have 164 horses left, the McCullough herd was recently rounded up in January of 2016. When I visited this herd in late June, 2016, I observed some very stressed-out wild horses, particularly one stallion that I saw performing some nervous "displacement behaviors," including frantically pawing the ground. He was off by himself, sweating profusely and very shaky and trembling. I truly sensed his profound misery; and my heart went out to him. As indicated earlier, wild mares who have been PZPed often reject one stallion after another when they fail to conceive. And this creates much anguish and stress for all concerned, including the rejected stallion.

Colorado's Sand Wash Basin Herd

Before closing, I would be renege were I not to mention a couple of distinguished herds from Colorado. The first being Colorado's Sand Wash Basin wild horse herd. This has also been heavily PZPed and, yet, here BLM continues to round them up. Approximately 92% of the forage in this HMA goes to sheep ranchers. There are 156,502 HMA acres here, but the AML is only between 163 and 362, for a mean of 263, corresponding to 595 acres per individual horse. There is a relatively high forage productivity here due to greater precipitation than in more arid areas of the West, so there should be considerably more horses. But the problem is getting the ranchers to cut back on their livestock. (See H.R. 5737 below.)

This famous herd is visited by thousands of ecotourists, most with cameras and telephoto lens – it is famous among wild horse photographers. The famous Medicine Hat stallion Picasso resides here and is, indeed, a majestic presence. Yet, in spite of this being a very treasured herd, the horses continue to be tortured and their future jeopardized by the heavy PZPing of mares and frequent herd-gutting roundups. These herd-gutting roundups also greatly increase the risk of catastrophic wildfires, since the horses are no longer present in adequate numbers to reduce dry flammable vegetation.



Palomino mare with her bay stallion amid the sagebrush in the Pine Nut Mountains



Livestock are largely displacing wild horses from their legal niche, as shown here in the Twin Peaks Herd Management Area

Consequently, often shortly after these roundups, there occur devastating and widely sweeping wildfires, such as occurred in California's Twin Peaks HMA in 2012.

Colorado's Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range

The second herd of concern in Colorado is the Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range. It has an HMA of 190,016 acres, but an AML of only between 90 and 150 for a mean of 120 horses, corresponding to 1,583 acres per individual wild horse – a nearly wild-horse-empty habitat. Yet by law within their legal HMA this unique herd is supposed to be the principal recipient of resources, space, water, forage, shelter and other survival requirements.

Little Book Cliffs' mares have been PZPed for many years, which has caused serious inbreeding risk. BLM officials have responded to this admitted risk by bringing in horses from outside to breed – but this waters down the precious genetics of this special and historic mustang lineage. And some serious signs of inbreeding have already been reported by frequent observers. For this reason, I propose these outstanding mustangs be protected under the Endangered Species Act as well as the WFHBA so that this unacceptable situation can be remedied by people who actually value and care for these horses and their natural home and freedom.

Other examples of PZPed herds and their continued roundups, over-fencing, restrictions from water sources and general unfair treatment are to be found throughout

the ten Western states where BLM and USFS still "manage" for wild horses and burros. These agencies' reports make it difficult to get at the greater picture concerning what is actually happening, so Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests have been made to expose what is wrong with this publicly valued program in order to quickly correct it and save the horses and burros from oblivion.

Write to Congress

A current bill, H.R. 5737, the Volunteer Grazing Permit Retirement Act, was introduced into Congress on January 30, 2020. Grazing permit retirement is a voluntary, non-regulatory, market-based solution to public lands grazing conflicts. Permittees determine if and when they want to retire their grazing permits. Permittees and third parties separately agree how much a permittee will be paid for relinquishing their permit. This would assist wild horses and burros if permittees in their areas will retire their permits. In the long run, fewer livestock on public lands will help to restore habitat. Contact your representative and encourage the passage of this bill at: <http://govtrack.us>.

Did you know that permittees graze one cow and one calf for \$1.35 per month? One can't feed a mouse for that monthly amount. Your tax dollars heavily subsidize this grazing program.

Please call your representative at 202-224-3121



BLM Speeds up Removals of Wild Horses

BLM continues to thumb their nose at the law

Since the recent approval of the government's Appropriation Act, there has been a notable increase in removals of wild horses. This is an effort to reduce the animals to an arbitrary number of 27,000 which is in direct violation of the 1971 Act. When the Act passed, there were nearly 60,000 wild animals and the Act clearly stated that those animals "were fast disappearing from the American scene."

The \$35,000,000-dollar appropriation that finally passed through the halls of Congress allows for approximately \$6,000,000 dollars just for the application of the pesticide drug, PZP, to sterilize the remaining 90% of the animals on public lands.

It is beyond belief that three organizations have signed onto to this tragic sellout of America's wild horses and burros. They are the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and Return to Freedom (RTF). It is a travesty that these organizations do not understand the law and allow the BLM to decimate our herds.

The setting of numbers (27,000) or AML (Appropriate Management Level) has been ruled against as far back as 1989 when the Interior Board of Land Appeals defined "excess" animals in the 1971 Act. The BLM continues to thumb their nose at the law.

If we are to have any wild horses and burros in the future, the "rule of law" must be retained in our country and the agencies must be held accountable for any violation.

While lawsuits require hundreds of thousands of dollars and several years of litigation, it appears this is the only way to stop these flagrant abuses of the law.



READY TO TAKE ACTION?

Find your representatives and senators using these links:

<https://www.house.gov>

<https://www.senate.gov>

BLM: Find your local office by going online or calling **202-208-3801**

<https://www.blm.gov/office/national-office>

Tara Rigler, Assistant Director, Communications

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More Heber Wild Horses Gunned Down

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Gunfire aimed at 15 wild horses...

The New Year began with gunfire aimed at another 15 wild horses from the Heber herd, killing all of them. Nine animals were found in one location while another six were found adjacent on the Black Mesa Ranger District.

In all, 31 dead animals have been accounted for but more are feared dead or missing. Reports of shooting went unanswered over New Year's Eve when reported to the Sheriff's office. It is not unusual to have firecrackers exploding over New Year's. The horses were found on January 9 and 14.

At the writing of this newsletter, a letter has been drafted by ISPMB's attorneys at Snell and Wilmer in Phoenix to the Forest Service requesting the Phoenix office of the FBI become involved to assist the Forest Service in finding the perpetrators of these crimes. The deaths have spanned nearly three years now and no arrests have been made.

The fine for killing a wild horse is \$100,000 and up to one year in prison. Although many articles state the fine is \$2,000, it is inaccurate. ISPMB was instrumental

in getting the U.S. federal prosecutors and the Bureau of Land Management to work together to increase the fine, using the Sentencing Reform Act of 1988 which allows for inflation.

ISPMB believes having an independent law enforcement agency will help in solving these crimes.



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Heber Wild Horse Territory Plan Released by the Forest Service

ISPMB and our attorneys are working on the plan.

In 2005, ISPMB initiated a civil action against the Forest Service (FS) alleging violations of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), and the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) to prevent the FS from rounding up and removing horses.

Part of the stipulation agreed upon in 2007 between ISPMB and the FS was the Heber Wild Horse Territory will continue to exist. Hence a Territory plan to manage the wild horses is a requirement by law.

The plan was finally released 13 years later on February 14, 2020. The plan calls for 50 to 104 wild horses in the Territory of which there are now approximately 200 animals. ISPMB is so pleased to have our attorneys working on the plan with us under the lead attorney, Anthony Merrill.

If you would like to comment, we ask you to emphasize these major points:

1. The FS cannot remove any wild horses until they are proven "excess" by the law. To do this, monitoring studies must be created fairly to determine who, if anyone, is causing damage to the habitat. Please follow the law.
2. Managing by setting AML (appropriate management level) is illegal and not in compliance with the definition of "excess." FS cannot set arbitrary numbers of horses in the territory.
3. We do not support giving birth control (PZP) but request the law be followed by supporting the phrase in the law, management should be "minimal feasible management." PZP is an endocrine disrupter and causes permanent sterility within four years and not seven as stated by the drug producers. It is intrusive management which is not in compliance with the law.
4. Wild horses have a "right" to their territory whereas livestock have only a "privilege."

The Territory Plan can be found at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=18916>

The comment form to send your response via e-mail is:

<https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=18916>

Unique Herd of Wild Horses Found in Japan

Located on the southern tip of Miyazaki Prefecture, Cape Toi in Kushima city is home to the Misaki horse, considered one of the native horses breeds in Japan and designated a national treasure.

The Cape is nearly two-square miles where the horses roam. The Misaki horse is said to originate from the Przewalski's wild horse which was introduced from the Eurasian continent about 2,000 years ago. The horses live in their natural state where visitors are welcomed.





Update on the Navajo Horses

Navajo horses look healthy this winter, aided by a volunteer who checks on their welfare



ISPMB was pleased to be able to give a small grant to assist this beautiful herd that roams a 25-mile mesa near Monument Valley. The horses appear to be tolerating the winter very well and the three water springs remain active with the help of “the wild horse angel” who voluntarily attends to the welfare of these animals spending his own funding on their preservation.

There is still funding needed to make sure our “angel” can make the long road trips out to see these horses. ISPMB appreciates any help in making sure that we can keep this herd viable.

Lasting Memories in Our Garden of Hope

A gift to the wild horses and burros in your will or trust will help ensure the safeguarding of their future. Your name will be displayed at the Garden of Hope at our Heritage Center. We are extremely grateful to all of our members who have notified us of their intent to remember our wild horses and burros.



Please note that ISPMB protects your name and address as we do not sell, share or trade your personal information. If you prefer to receive an e-newsletter, send us your email address. E-newsletters will help save ISPMB money, which can be used to care for our horses.

Spirit of the Ancients

Sponsorship Program

ISPMB manages an extremely rare Spanish herd of wild horses.

Your sponsorship will help us keep them running free!

Become a part of the sponsorship program with the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros (ISPMB), the oldest wild horse and burro organization in the United States. Your sponsorship helps with the care of our Gila herd and supports ISPMB's conservation goals.



Sponsor a Wild Horse \$150/year

Sponsor a harem stallion, mare, foal, bachelor or stallion and receive a certificate with a photo of your horse and the history of the Gila Herd.



Sponsor a Mare and Foal \$500/year

Sponsor this beautiful mare and her foal showing their close bond and follow them as the foal grows. Receive a certificate with their photo. This makes a wonderful gift that someone you love is sure to cherish.



Sponsor a Wild Horse Band \$1,000/year

Receive a certificate featuring a unique band from the Gila herd. You'll also receive an 8x10" colored photo along with the herd's history.



Sponsor a Wild Horse Herd \$5,000/year

Receive a certificate, an 8x10" colored photo and a three-day vacation viewing, photographing and interacting with the herds. Your name will be inscribed on our donor wall as a founding member of our International Wild Horse and Burro Heritage Center.

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WE CAN PUT ANY SIZE DONATION TO WORK:

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\$500 Sponsor a mare and foal for a year

\$1,000 Sponsor a band for a year

\$5,000 Sponsor a herd for a year

\$35,000 ... Feed Gila herd for a year**

*Feeds an average horse for approximately a month

**Become a lifetime member of ISPMB