

Newsletter

Spring 2014

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## The Life Story of a Very Special Burro

By: Karen Sussman



Living in the frigid cold of South Dakota is not conducive to having many burros out here. When we moved to South Dakota in 2000, we had three burros at our facility that made the long trek to snow country. Margo, Rita, and Jacque lived the high life here in spite of the weather. This is the story about Jacque, a Lake Pleasant, AZ burro who enriched our lives here and taught us many lessons.

On his 31st year, with temperatures below zero here, we found Jacque in his stall in the warmth of the barn and a deep bed of shavings peacefully sleeping. He has passed early in the morning of March 1st, with his

longtime buddy, Rita, watching over him. I had just been in the barn the day before loving and hugging on the burros and giving them much desired treats. I loved hearing their braying as they always begged for more. Jacque was never as vocal as Rita but his actions were clear to us about what his needs were from the first day he arrived at ISPMB.

Back in 1990 when Lake Pleasant was being created, it took a third of the Lake Pleasant Wild Burro Herd Area habitat. Jacque's life took a permanent turn when water from the Waddell Dam was being released to make this great recreational Lake Pleasant. Jacque and his partners were stranded on an island in the middle of the "new lake" to be. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) realized that these burros would drown unless they could be taken off the island as at some point this island would eventually be submerged into the lake.

The BLM roped Jacque and tied the rope behind the boat and dragged Jacque and all of the other burros (16 or so) off the island. One just has to realize what aversion burros have to getting their feet wet, let alone swimming in water. They will go the longest way around an area to miss having to walk through water. They also hate being roped, choked down, and dragged just like any wild animal would. But that is how Jacque's association with people began.

ISPMB adopted him in 1990 because we had hoped to gentle him and place him in the Children's Petting Zoo where we could then teach about the importance of protecting the Lake Pleasant Burro herd located 35 miles outside of Phoenix. Phoenix was growing rapidly and was home to nearly 2.5 million people at that time. It was also that year that there was a massacre of 50 (only 49 were found) wild burros in Kingman by marksmen who shot them through their heart. Education is the key to change and we had planned to take Jacque home for R & R periods. This was not to happen as the Children's Petting Zoo was closed and now under construction for the next year.

Jacque was seven years old when he came to us. He was a handsome gray burro with the black striping down his back and shoulders. We soon found out that he

hated ropes and halters. How could we blame him? When it was time for the farrier to come, we would lightly sedate him and I would hold my arm around his neck and just love on him. He was always agreeable.

It took a while for Jacque to begin trusting these two-legged creatures. But soon he melted into our arms allowing us to touch him and hold his face as we kissed his soft nose. He loved carrots too. It was so nice that we had Margo and Rita (mother and daughter) who helped Jacque assimilate to his new life.

After moving to South Dakota, Jacque allowed me to halter him and put a rope on while the farrier trimmed his feet. Jacque never wanted to be tied and there was no need because all the burros had to do here was to enjoy life the way they wanted.

Getting feet trimmed here in SD was always an undertaking. I would have to haul the burros two hours in the trailer to find the best farrier. Thank goodness, their feet rarely needed it as services are scant here in the middle of nowhere. Jacque was getting so good that I just had to put an arm around him while the farrier trimmed all four feet- no sedation.

Then our farrier quit the profession to drive truck! We sought out another farrier. This one, Jacque taught a very good lesson. Whether the farrier learned from him, I don't know as he was fired after the second encounter with Jacque. The farrier tied Jacque up to a gate while I was busy with another horse. Of course this was after I explained that he could not be tied. When I got back, I said, "You can't tie Jacque!" I rushed up to him and untied him but Jacque was mad after fighting the rope and then all the work that we had done with him getting his feet trimmed went out the window. We had to sedate Jacque again to get his feet trimmed.

Several months later when the farrier came, we tried again getting Jacque's feet done without sedation. Well Jacque remembered his first encounter and when the right time came, he kicked the farrier hard in the leg. The farrier left the barn swearing! Of course we had to sedate Jacque after that. So that was the last day that this farrier ever came to our barn. It is all in the attitude of the people who worked with Jacque. Jacque was always so sweet to us and we never worried about him hurting anyone as he never had a mean bone in his body. Trust us that this farrier was not a friend to wild horses or burros and it was evident, especially to Jacque.

Wild animals, especially burros, can assess the character of a person in less than five minutes. They are extremely intelligent and like horses, have a memory second only to elephants. They don't panic like wild horses but like Jacque taught us - they don't forget and can get even.

*We need to treat animals as we want to be treated, humanely and with lots of love and respect. Relationships with animals are about sharing with each other and not one of domination and control as is taught by so many trainers. It is a simple lesson in life and Jacque taught us well.*

**YOUR DONATIONS SUPPORT OUR STUDIES- TRUTH WILL SAVE AMERICA'S WILD HORSES!**

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## ISPMB Herds Show That Functional Social Structures Contribute to Low Herd Growth Compared to BLM Managed Herds

(Published 9/13)

As we complete our 14th year in studying the White Sands and Gila herds, two isolated herds, which live in similar habitat but represent two different horse cultures, have demonstrated much lower reproductive rates than BLM managed herds. Maintaining the "herd integrity" with a hands off management strategy ("minimal feasible management") and no removals in 14 years has shown us that functional herds demonstrating strong social bonds and leadership of elder animals is key to the behavioral management of population growth.

ISPMB's president, Karen Sussman, who has monitored and studied ISPMB's four wild herds all these years explains, "We would ascertain from our data that due to BLM's constant roundups causing the continual disruption of the very intricate social structures of the harem bands has allowed younger stallions to take over losing the mentorship of the older wiser stallions.

In simplistic terms Sussman makes the analogy that over time Harvard professors (elder wiser stallions) have been replaced by errant teenagers (younger bachelor stallions). We know that generally teenagers do not make good parents because they are children themselves.

Sussman's observations of her two stable herds show that there is tremendous respect commanded amongst the harems. Bachelor stallions learn that respect from their natal harems. Bachelors usually don't take their own harems until they are ten years of age when they show emotional maturity. Mares mature emotionally must faster because they are pregnant by the age of five.

Also observed in these herds is the length of time that fillies remain with their natal bands. The fillies leave when they are bred by an outside stallion at the age of four or five years. Often as first time mothers, they do quite well with their foals but foal mortality is higher than with seasoned mothers.

Sussman has also observed in her Gila herd where the harems work together for the good of the entire herd. "Seeing this cooperative effort is quite exciting," states Sussman.

ISPMB's third herd, the Catnips, coming from the Sheldon Wildlife Range where efforts are underway to eliminate all horses on the refuge, demonstrate exactly the reverse of the organization's two stable herds. The first year of their arrival (2004) their fertility rates were 30% the following first and second years. They have loose band formations and some mares are without any harem stallions. Stallions are observed breeding fillies as young as one year of age. Foal mortality is very high in this herd. Generally there is a lack of leadership and wisdom noted in the stallions as most of them were not older than ten years of age when they arrived. In 2007, a decision to use PZP on

this herd, a contraceptive, was employed by ISPMB. This herd remains a very interesting herd to study over time according to Sussman. "The question is, can a dysfunctional herd become functional," says Sussman who speculates that the Catnips emulate many of the public lands herds.

In 1990-92 when Sussman and her colleague, Mary Ann Simonds, served on the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board, they believed that BLM's management should change and recommended that selective removals should begin by turning back all the older and wiser animals to retain the herd wisdom. Today, Sussman realizes that the missing ingredient was to stop the destruction of the harem bands caused by helicopter roundups where harem stallions are separated from their mares. "Instead, bait and water trapping, band by band, needed to be instituted immediately," says Sussman. BLM's selective removal policy was to return all horses over the age of five. It was convenient for the BLM since five and under horses were easily adopted. When the older stallions and mares were released all at once back to their herd management areas, younger stallions under the age of ten fought for the mares and took mares from the older wiser stallions. Stealing mares happens when harem bands are disrupted. There is a free-for-all for the young bachelors and older wiser harem stallions cannot stop them.

Sussman says that BLM's assertion as to why horse herds double every four years is incorrect. The two reasons given are federal protection of wild horse herds and lack of natural predators. ISPMB herds are also protected and also have no natural predators, but they do not reproduce exponentially. Wild horse population growth on BLM lands must have another cause. The chief contributing factor in creating population growth is BLM's heavy-handed disruption and destruction of wild horse social structures from frequent roundups.

Population statistics show that ISPMB's White Sands herd had just doubled after 14 years while the Spanish Gila herd is growing at an average rate over 14 years of just 10% while BLM herds grow 20% yearly.

Sussman concludes that ISPMB herds are given the greatest opportunity for survival, compared to the BLM's herds which are not monitored throughout the year. "One would assume," Sussman says, "herds that are well taken care of and monitored closely would have a greater survival rate and they do! But functional herds under the most optimum conditions do not increase fertility rates – they have low stable growth rates."

**What will BLM have to do to produce low growth rate of their herds? It is simple  
Stop helicopter roundups allowing for stability of the family harems.**



## Law Suits Abounding by Livestock Organizations

Idaho and Nevada have filed appeals and law suits against the BLM ranging from complaints of the reduction of their cattle to requesting the BLM act immediately in eliminating the 50,000 plus wild horses in holding pastures.

It is estimated that 60,000 wild horses will be warehoused in holding pastures this year by the BLM. Those numbers are twice the number that exists on public lands now.



## ISPMB Takes a Firm Stand Against BLM's Assertion of Overpopulation

While many organizations advocate in BLM's corner, knowingly or unknowingly, by promoting birth control for wild horses, ISPMB takes a very strong position that wild horses and burros are "fast disappearing from the American West." These are the same words that the 1971 Wild Horses and Burros Act asserts in its first paragraph.



We must remember that when the first count was done in 1974, nearly 60,000 animals were visually counted. Visual counts are notoriously known to undercount animals by up to 50%. Although an arbitrary number of 17,000 animals was determined in 1971 based on supposition, the number was far from factual.

BLM even tried to fool the public in a paper published stating that due to their good care, horses have doubled since 1971 from 17,000 to 30,000. We are lucky if we have 30,000 animals on public lands which means that the BLM has cut the population in half. They continue to downsize animals and zero out herd areas where animals had and continue to have the right to roam. In 1971, there were 303 areas identified and we are down to 179 and dropping.

In direct contrast, there are approximately 4 million plus cattle and sheep on public land to which tax-payers pay 1/2 billion dollars annually to support. Wildlife numbers also total nearly 4 million animals which pale in comparison to the 30,000 or fewer wild horses/burros on public lands.

Advocates MUST take the stance of the truth which is, "there is no overpopulation of the horses or burros." (See ISPMB Herds Show Low Herd Growth)

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT By: Karen Sussman

Thank you to our many contributors who helped so much to support us and raise our spirits after the devastating ATLAS storm that hit western SD in October. How can anyone say that we have recovered from the effects of this storm? We are assured that we have physically recovered from Atlas but emotionally is another story. Knowing how the cattlemen came together to aid each other makes me realize that horse groups 'should' be united but we are not. Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary in southern SD was the only humane group that helped. We are eternally grateful to them. This lack of support is an obvious sign why wild horses are diminishing on public lands and livestock hold their numbers in spite of decreasing vegetation from overgrazing by livestock for the past one-hundred plus years.

This is the year that ISPMB will have its studies compiled and ready to go to Congress and the BLM. This is no small task to compile fifteen years of data! It is exciting to say that we will soon be ready and armed with important data.

Time is of the essence to get our data out, as BLM prepares to take action against our 52,000 wild horses in holding pastures and those remaining on public lands. In August, 2013, BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Chief, Joan Guilfoyle recommended euthanasia for horses in the field if BLM's budget

were cut even a slim 5%. Although the budget was never cut, BLM is first to advocate for euthanasia.

Lastly, hay prices are now about twice what they were in 2011. We are expecting a good rain year in SD which means more hay. Our horse numbers have stayed steady but our budget tripled when hay prices tripled in 2012-13. Now we are seeing doubling of the prices which may continue in spite of the subsiding drought conditions in our country.

Your financial support is needed more than ever to assure that we can concentrate on and complete our mission this year – getting our studies out to Congress and the BLM.

*Your horses and I thank you!*



Karen and someone who wants to say hello!



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## Horse Slaughter Defeated Until September 30th and Maybe Longer

The Chinese New Year of the Horse began at the end of January, 2014 and coincidentally ushered in the official signing of the farm bill by President Obama at Michigan State University on Friday, February 7th.

How fitting for America's horses that the signing of this \$956 billion dollar bill into law took place in the Equine Performance Center. Section 745 of the bill prohibits funds under this Act from being used to inspect horses for slaughter purposes. Defunding the USDA inspectors stops all horse slaughter in our country.

The last horse slaughter plant closed in 2007 and the defunding language was carried through until 2012 when it was surreptitiously pulled from the spending bill by the conference committee that reconciles the House and Senate bills even though it passed through the Senate and the House.

Re-funding USDA inspectors, during this time, provided the pro-slaughter movement of Sue Wallis to move forward preparing to open horse slaughter plants in our country. (See Pro-Slaughter Activist Dies) Due to time constraints and the inability to see profits,



two of the three slaughter plants moved on to slaughtering cattle instead while the Roswell, NM plant stood fast in their determination to kill horses. A disturbing U-Tube video of the plant's only employee showed him taking his personal horse up to the camera and then shooting his horse in the head while yelling obscenities at the anti-slaughter movement. This act of rebellion and callousness

brought such uproar by the public that the Roswell plant fired their only employee.

How long the defunding language will stay in the bill after the end of September is anyone's guess. If there is no budget passed in 2015 then a continuing resolution will happen keeping defunding in place benefitting horses. According to the Congressional Research Service, Congress has passed a full budget only three times in the past 26 years! Most years they pass a continuing resolution for all or most of the twelve individual budgets.

The final farm bill replaces direct crop payments with an insurance program and trims \$8 billion from food stamps over the next decade.

## Pro Slaughter Activist Death Unexpected

Wyoming Representative, Sue Wallis, died unexpectedly at the age of 56 on January 28th, 2014. She was found in a hotel room in Gillette, Wyoming.

Cause of death unknown. She had been in the state legislature since 2007 and was the leading advocate for horse slaughter in our country.

## Cattlemen's Fund Continues to Grow

There is now over \$6 million in this fund created to help livestock producers who lost cattle and sheep in our 'storm of the century,' Atlas. Disbursements have already been flowing into the hands of livestock producers. They also will receive financial coverage of 75% of the value for each animal that was killed.

This funding comes from your tax dollars in the farm bill. In essence, most producers will have their losses covered.

It does not appear that horses will be covered but the farm bill is explicit in stating that horses are considered "livestock."



Watson

## Update on the SAFE Act



Today 168 of the 435 Representatives have signed onto the Act while 27 Senators have signed on. Since our last newsletter, only 9 new Representatives signed on and the Senate remains unchanged. It is important to ask your Congress people to support the SAFE Act. (Safeguard American Food Exports Act.)

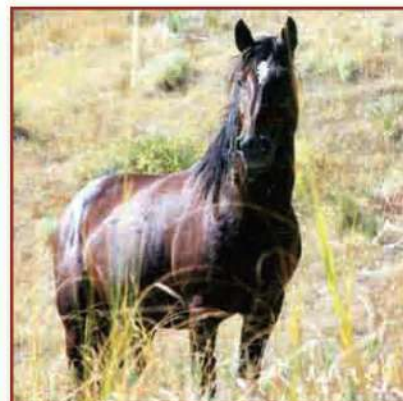
*This Act will finally end the selling of horses for slaughter to Canada and Mexico.* At least 160,000 horses are being sold yearly from our country for slaughter to our northern and southern neighbors.

Approximately 1% of our country's 9 million horses die annually. If 700,000 horses are euthanized or die of natural causes yearly, we surely can stop the suffering of the 160,000 that die by the inhumane act of slaughter.

## ISPMB Loses an Icon



This past December, ISPMB gave a final farewell to one of our greatest harem stallions. *The Great Chief* was from the White Sands herd. Although we never knew his age, we estimated that he was in his mid twenties or close to thirty when he passed. We watched as another stallion join his harem and help him the year before his death. There was never any fighting between the stallions. Eventually The Great Chief was unable to command his harem and soon after we found him dead. He lived a great life with the same mares he had when we brought him to South Dakota from New Mexico in 1999. He had the largest harem of all the harem stallions in all four herds. He was by far the greatest harem stallion that we have witnessed. He surely will be missed by all. He lived a long, peaceful life with his family, something that cannot be said for public lands horses.



## South Dakota Experiences One of Its Coldest Winters

Although there is not much snow on the ground this year, SD has experienced one of its ten coldest winters since record keeping of weather began 121 years ago. For nearly two weeks in February, temperatures rarely rose above zero degrees and most of the winter we saw single digits.

The horses do quite well which is a testament to their wild nature but their hay consumption is up due to the fuel needed to keep warm, leaving our winter hay supply dwindling.

**Feeding four wild horse herds is no small task and we thank you for your wonderful support.**



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- Purchase a bag of milk for a foal ..... \$125
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