

Wild Horses and Modern America

No one knows for certain just how many wild horses and burros have died for lack of feed or water on governmentally managed lands since the Wild Horse and Burro Act was passed in the early 1970's but the numbers has to be in the thousands.

Ignorance is a big part of the problem. At no time have I ever known or heard of the government taking care of a watering source. They do put in developments once in a while – but take care of them – it just doesn't happen. And as far as keeping the numbers of animals in line with the amount of feed that is available – it seldom happens – not until it is too late and there are horses dying all over the place.

The primary responsibility for such suffering does not lie with government entirely however- for in truth it has been the American people themselves who have called for the socialist management and control of more and more of our nation's resources during recent decades. Modern environmentalist – animal rightists – those who put their own needs before all else, and those who turn their heads apathetically to what is going on around them – all should share in the blame.

In the country to the east and south of us – in Butte Valley, and Long Valley, and on the mountains surrounding, there are now hundreds and hundreds of wild horses. The BLM is not running them in the numbers that were there at the time the Wild and Free Horse Act was passed, but rather, they are running them in numbers that are taking the majority of feed that is produced even before winter comes. Consequently, when a hard winter comes the horses suffer.

What is not well understood is, there may be a lot of country where horse herds are run, but that doesn't mean that there is a lot of winter range available. The winter of 1992 and 93 is a good example. We didn't get a lot of snow during November and December that winter, but there was enough snow to force the horses to use the south slopes and wind blown ridges. Now keep in mind, the south slopes and wind blown ridges are only a small area as compared to the whole – and they were already overused going into the winter. Consequently, when we did get heavy snows in January, the horses were already weak and not in a condition to live on the tops of sagebrush for several weeks as animals must do under such circumstances. So a lot of them died.

And when the snow did begin to go off, it first went off of those same south slopes and wind blown ridges that the horses had already overused. And so, even though there was by then some bare ground, because of the absence of feed, even more horses died.

Knowing the country as I do, and having knowledge of the effects of similar situations, I figured there was a lot of horses dying on the foothills east of us late in the winter – so along toward the last of February I ask my son, Charley to take his snowmobile across the valley to assess the situation. What he found was what I expected. Many of the horses that were still living were so thin and weak they could not even trot without stumbling or falling.

During the months that followed I talked to several people who I knew were familiar with the country – some from our part of Elko County, and some from White Pine County, and some from Eureka County – they all said the same thing – in their estimation, approximately 50 percent of the wild horses had died that winter. Even the Area Manager for the Wells Resource Area, Bill Baker, admitted at a PLUAC meeting in Elko that following Fall, that by their count, 47% of the wild horses had “disappeared”.

Not long after Charley had made his trip across the flat to assess the condition of the wild horses, I decided I would phone some of the animal rights people in Elko to see if they would be interested in doing something about the situation.

I called a person in Elko who was, I understood, the chairman of the Humane Society for Elko County and explained what was happening to the wild horses in our area – and suggested that I be allowed to make a presentation to her group so that an effort could be made to see that such a thing never happened again.

As I suspected, as soon as she found out that it was the government that was responsible for the suffering and not a private party, she lost interest. She did give me the name of another person though, that I understood was then serving as the executive secretary of their organization, and so I called her. And again, this second lady also expressed concern until she learned that it was the government that was responsible. From then on she showed little interest.

Next I called the Office of the Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses in Carson City and talked to the person in charge, and again I explained my concern for the mismanagement of the wild horses in our area. But this time I met with even more resistance. When I told her of how the range had been overused by wild horses, she quickly informed me that it was not the wild horses that were overgrazing the range but the ranchers that were running in the area. When I informed her that the Medicine Range was no longer being grazed since the Sorensen family had been forced out of the sheep business, and that the 7H ranch had been taking non use in the Ruby Wash and the Mavericks for several years because of overgrazing by wild horses, she became quite upset with me. And that ended our conversation.

To some, this might not seem significant – that several thousand horses died of starvation one winter, but if that’s true, why is it then that we have animal rightist in every community across

this nation demanding that even the slightest possible abuse of a single animal be curbed even when the claimed abuse is often questionable. Is it that these people sympathize with animals as they profess, or is it more a vendetta they have against man and his activities? I'm serious; everything I have seen or experienced indicates that these people, both of the environmental movement and the animal rights movement lack any real concern for animals – for as far as they are concerned great numbers of animals can suffer year after year just so long as it is the government that is responsible. But if someone from the private sector that may have been responsible, watch out, because they're going to come after that individual with a vengeance.

In his book, "Time to Cry Wolf", Dr. Lester McCann suggests that such behavior is "a product of man's avaricious nature". Dr. McCann wrote, "It reveals a kind of self-spanking, derogatory, nothing's worse than people attitude – a kind of masochism."

I'm afraid that I'm a good deal more critical than is Dr. McCann. I believe that the environmental and animal rights movements are largely made up of people who are basically dishonest. They are selfish and irresponsible, and they don't give a hoot about who they hurt or what they hurt, just as long as they can pursue their own brand of ideology.

The fact that these people are never held responsible for the destruction they cause, calls up the fact that there is something fundamentally wrong in America today. People who are so willing to see that action is taken that in the end is so hurtful of others when in truth the actions they demand in the end harm wildlife or involved animals should be held accountable.

And too, I'd like to say a little about the Ruby Pipeline controversy that has gotten so many people's attention here recently. Is there anyone involved who can deny that the whole thing is corrupt? Can anyone deny, that such abuse will only lead to more of the same. When are we Americans going to start standing up against such abuse? What would it have been like in America over the last two hundred or so years if our forefathers had not done what they did to see that everything was done fairly and honestly? Come on everyone – If the environmentalists get their way on this one, it will not help our neighbors, our nation, or our wildlife. It will only hurt our neighbors, our communities, and our wildlife - including sage grouse. So let's stand united against it. Let's do something good here in America for a change.