

George Parman

I'm well into my seventies now. I ran and trapped a lot of wild horses in my time. I've been in and out of the ranching business. I've trapped - cut post - over a good portion of the state of Nevada, and I tell you, I have never been so disgusted. For more than forty years now, all I've been hearing is how livestock are destroying the range, how cruel the mustangers were, or how the trees and bugs are being harmed. - when in fact, it's been the government and all the do-gooders that have been the problem causers. Take the wild horse issue for example. For years I thought people would wake up and come to their senses someday, and things would get better. But instead it's gotten worse. I just wish I knew how many horses have died because of mismanagement in Nevada since "The Wild and Free Roaming Horse Act" was passed in 1971. It's got to be in the thousands. Even up until last winter there in Kobeh Valley there were at last a couple hundred horses that were starving. But nothing was worse than what happened in the country south of there in the 1990's. Clear from Highway 6, all the way up through Little Sand Springs Valley and that country, clear to Highway 50. The range was eaten off to nothing. Water holes were trampled in - water developments destroyed. All because people from all over the country seem to think they have to have a say in how our wild horses are to be managed.

I've taken a lot of pictures of dying horses over the years. I'm sending along three that were taken in the area I just spoke of. The first picture shows horses attempting to suck water from the mud of a spring which has been nearly destroyed by the trampling of horses. The second picture is a closeup of the spring itself. And the third picture shows the end result. Note how the horse in the third picture, has pawed the ground - too weak to get up - suffering day after day, until the poor thing finally died. Just imagine if you will, the total impact of these kinds of situations - wildlife, livestock, everything suffers.

Horses, it should be remembered are larger than most animals. Even under ideal conditions, when there is plenty of feed and water on a range, they'll run other livestock or wildlife off a water hole. But when conditions like this occur, it can be terrible. Dozens of horses, all standing around waiting for a chance to suck mud or sip a little water, half of them being big studs, kicking and fighting each other and fighting off all the younger and weaker animals. Nothing can be more cruel than a bunch of mustang studs, biting and kicking everything around them. No other animal can compete. Colts get knocked down, trampled and separated from their mothers - who are often so dehydrated they don't care whether they have a colt or not. These pictures, I'm afraid, don't show to the full extent the true horrors of it all. When these kinds of things happen, it doesn't happen in just one small area or at just one water hole - it happens over an entire rangeland.

The sad thing is, there seems to be no end in sight for these kinds of tragedies. The number of radical animal rights people and horse lovers, who in the end cause all the damage and suffering seems to be growing. And to think the only solution that anyone has come up with is the, "adopt a horse program", or holding facilities where thousands of horses are held indefinitely at the cost of millions of dollars each year. To me its insanity. What we should do is - we should return to the old days, when people living within local communities decided what was best for the horses and resources that are found within their communities. Not people looking out their windows of

their clean and polished offices in Texas or Colorado dreaming about the mustangs they own in Nevada, while the horses themselves starve and more and more ranchers are forced out of business. No, what we need to do, is to let the ranchers and the mustangers take care of the problem, just as they did in the old days, back when, along in the Fall a handful of cowboys would take their saddle horses - throw a bunch of grub and their bedrolls in the back of a pickup - and off they'd go to do a little mustanging. It was a perfect system. The most qualified and experienced people were engaged. The horses were automatically kept at reasonable numbers. It cost the taxpayer nothing. The best of the horses were put on the market for people to use and enjoy. The remainder of the older and less desirable animals were euthanatized via a facility that made good use of the end product. Rangelands were not overstocked. Springs were kept open and maintained by the ranchers. The cattle had plenty to eat. The horses had plenty to eat. Wildlife did well. Everything was better.

Of course no one would agree to something like that today. What would all the wild horse people do if they agreed to something like that? They wouldn't have a cause to pursue, or anything to bitch about. What about the people that administer the program. It wouldn't do to put them out of work - especially during times of high unemployment. And so, I suppose we will go on, doing as we have in the past, even if our rangelands continue to deteriorate, the horses continue to suffer, and more and more ranchers are put out of business. Its insanity, I tell you, its insanity. But that's the way things are done these days.

George Parman, Eureka Nevada 1 / 25 / 10