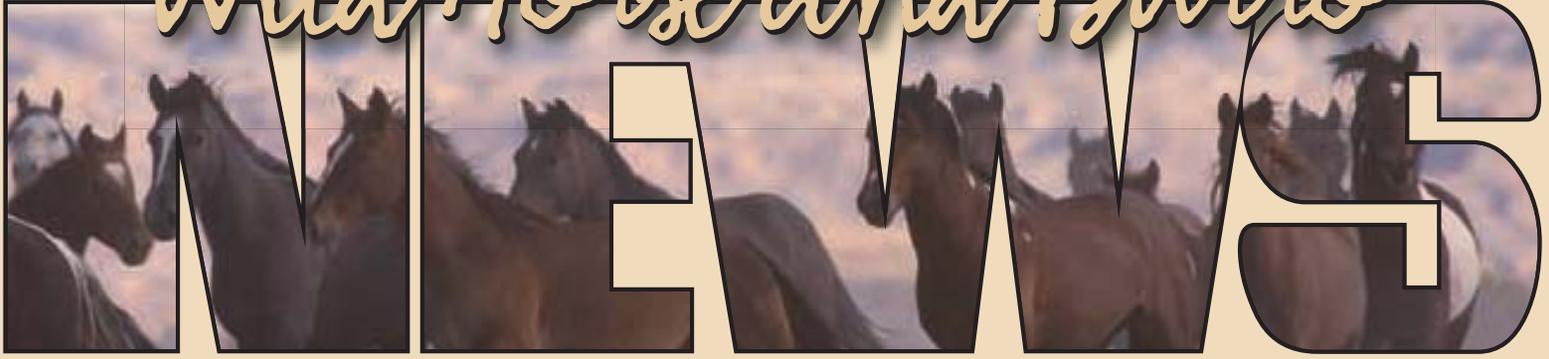


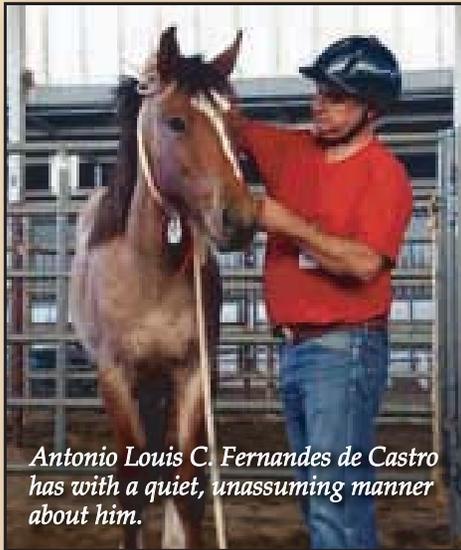
Wild Horse and Burro



A PROFILE AND SNAPSHOT

Wild Horse Workshop 2004

By Steven Levine, Oakland, California, BLM Volunteer



Antonio Louis C. Fernandes de Castro has with a quiet, unassuming manner about him.

A unique equine experience has taken place in a different part of the country, every year, for the last seven years. A joint collaboration between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Least Resistance Training Concepts, Inc. (L.R.T.C.), has resulted in a Wild Horse Workshop that has allowed hundreds of mustangs to be gentled and hundreds of potential adopters to be given hands-on training experience, prior to adopting and taking home a wild mustang or burro.

This year's Wild Horse Workshop and adoption took place in Brentwood, California. What makes this unique is that some of the best trainers in the country come together to give of themselves and their time in order to help horses and potential adopters learn about each other. In the process, wild horses and burros and the public are introduced to training using natural horsemanship.

A true attitude of willingness to share ideas was evident throughout the weeklong symposium. One of the many things that impressed me was how open the organizers and professional trainers were to learning from each other as well as teaching the public.

Not only did the trainers come together from all over the country, but the participants also came from all directions and points in between. I can't even guess how many states were represented by all of us there, but we all brought something to the party. All ages and levels of experience were represented, from first-time horse owners to those of us who own and train horses. We all came to learn, and we did. What follows is a good example of what I'm

talking about. It tells the story of a particularly interesting participant in the 2004 workshop, Antonio Louis C. Fernandes de Castro.

Mr. de Castro is a man with a quiet, unassuming manner about him, but it was so obvious what a natural way he has with horses that he quickly caught my attention and that of those around me. Another workshop participant, internationally renowned trainer and clinician Frank Bell, put it this way: After hitting a brick wall with a couple of truly problem

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U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wild Horse and Burro Program

National Perspective

By Jeff Rawson, Group Manager, Wild Horse and Burro Program

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Program will continue to be the key focus for 2005. There are over 70 adoptions scheduled nationwide this year. As you will read in this issue of the News, there is a mustang or burro that is perfect for each of us.

Providing a home for a mustang or burro is a challenging and rewarding experience. For qualified individuals, this is a unique opportunity to care for, then own, a "Living Legacy" -- a symbol of American history.

With kindness and patience, you can train a mustang or burro for many uses. Mustangs have become champions in dressage, jumping, barrel racing, endurance riding, and pleasure riding. Burros excel in driving, packing, riding, guarding, and serving as companion animals. Both mustangs and burros are known for their sure-footedness, strength, intelligence, and endurance.

We are working to strengthen our Adoption Program. One way is to increase the promotion of our Adoption Events. In addition, the BLM is working toward making our advertising consistent nationwide and targeting each community where an adoption is scheduled to ensure the event information is distributed to a wide audience. We are also improving our volunteer program through a pilot project that will focus on increasing the use of volunteers and the types of projects volunteers are involved in.

If you are interested in helping to ensure that our Adoption Program continues to place mustangs and burros with caring families, please volunteer to help at the next adoption in your area. You can help us promote Adoption Events by distributing flyers to tack and feed stores, grocery stores, boarding stables, and other central locations in your communities, and by telling your neighbors when an adoption is in your area. If you are interested in assisting the BLM to ensure America's Living Legends, mustangs and burros, are placed in good adoptive homes, please contact your local BLM Office. BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program Offices can be found at <http://www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov/state.htm>.

Together, we can make a difference.

Sally Spencer, Marketing Director

Janet Neal, Editor

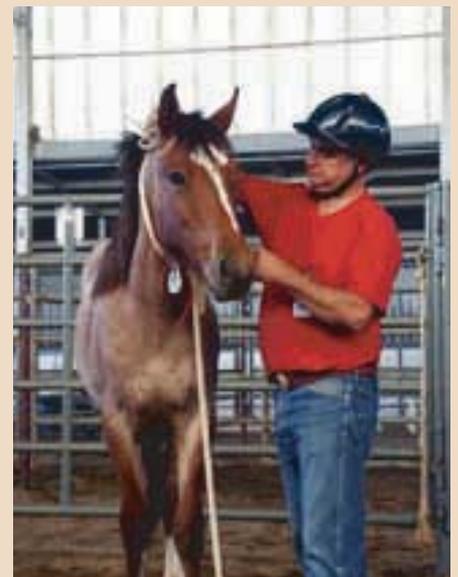
Ted Bailey, Art Director

If you would like to submit articles for the Wild Horse and Burro News, please e-mail articles and photos (atleast 300 dpi) to Janet.Neal@blm.gov or mail to Janet Neal, Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 12000, Reno, NV 89520, Phone 775-861-6614

A PROFILE AND SNAPSHOT
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horses, our eyes were glued, watching his remarkable progress by using his body language, which ranged from animated to phenomenally subtle. In approximately one hour, he was able to get a rope on a horse and have it follow by feel. This culminated with him lovingly stroking this very resistant mare. Now this was the filly we had affectionately called "Hot Heels". This nickname came from her determination to kick one of us into the next county. Fantastic!"

Antonio had found out about the workshop on the Internet, just like I had and had been as intrigued as I had been. Unlike me, however, Antonio came all the way from Portugal to attend this workshop with the wild mustangs of the American West. Here's the background behind the man whose skill with horses made such an impression on us.



Antonio comes from a ranch near Lisbon that has been in his family since the fourteenth century, when the King of Portu-

gal awarded his family with the land. He raises Lucitano and Arabian horses, and the family is still in the cattle business. He also raises bulls for the bull-fights. In Portugal, this is done from horseback, and the bulls live to fight another day. He subscribes to many equine magazines and publications to keep up to date with the horse world.

Back in the late eighties, he started to see articles about a new, although not new, type of training, natural horsemanship. This he had to see. He flew to America to attend a clinic in Pennsylvania and has been coming over once or twice a year ever since. He has learned from several of the best-known practitioners of the craft in the years that have followed. He also wanted me to acknowledge the great trainer Nuno Oliveira and give him the credit for the classical training that Antonio combines with what he has learned over here.

Like a lot of us, he needed to be convinced about natural horsemanship, but seeing is believing. He rode one of his stallions to the Portuguese Horse Fair without a bridle or halter to show his countrymen what was possible. He was laughing as he told how they were looking and touching the horse expecting to find some invisible guide, like fishing line. He trains only his own horses and doesn't take outside clients. However, when selling one of his horses, Antonio insists that the new owners spend five days to a week on his ranch to learn his method of communication.

Besides having always been interested in wild horses, he had a practical reason for making the trip. As Willis Lamm, head of L.R.T.C. commented, "In Portugal, horses are turned out till the age of four before they are brought in to start their training. We used to do that in this country. Regardless of where they come from, they all speak the same language." Antonio saw this as an opportunity to learn different training techniques and of course, to learn from the horses.

The first thing that he learned from the horses was that all of his preconceived ideas were wrong. As he put it, "I expected to see scrawny, malnourished, small horses. Like gypsy horses. Not true. I was very surprised to see fat, glossy, very healthy horses. These wild horses have good conformation, good bones (structure), and they are of a very reasonable size for many sports and disciplines." We both agreed that the workshop itself is very professionally organized and the BLM has done a wonderful job with the horses. What is obvious is that everyone is here for the horses. That remains the first priority, as it should be. Antonio told me, "There are no bad horses here. Some have bad habits, for people, but natural for them. I'm very happy to be able to be involved and able to learn from each other."

This is one of the interesting and great folks I met in the week we spent with 80 mustangs and 20 burros. Antonio was one who came to learn and ended up

teaching. I expect several of the friendships I made to continue and grow in the years to come. After all, this is a labor of love. Antonio and I only wished we could do more. There are so many horses, so little time.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) does not advocate or actively support any specific wild horse or burro trainer, nor are we in a position to recommend who may or may not be best. It is the ultimate responsibility of the adopter to evaluate the trainer's credentials, references, and techniques.

It Depends

By Rob Pliskin, Trainer, Wild Horse Adopter, and BLM Volunteer

This article is to help you be safe and effective in gentling your mustang. You will read about several goals that make sense for you and your horse, and some specific kinds of gentling methods to begin to accomplish your goals.

As you accomplish your goals, you will create your own safe and enjoyable work relationship with your wild horse. Both you and your mustang are starting a new way of life. As your animal's new leader, you are now responsible for his safety, security, nutrition, and care. You help him find food and water. You tell him when to walk, run, stop, and turn. In exchange, he gives you complete attention, willingness, swift feet, and his unique personality. This is a necessity for your horse, a way of life. It is how your animal survived in the wild. Now it is your turn to teach him how to live in our world, the human

world. Your horse will give you a ton of Heart in return.

“How long will training take?” You have probably already asked yourself this question, or had friends and family ask. The answer, of course, is “it depends.” That’s gentling - “it depends.” The simple message here is: do not, by any means, get in a hurry. Nevertheless, don’t let it go, either. Let’s get to specifics, and then you can see for yourself, once you are out in the pen.

Please note -- no two adopters are exactly alike. That also goes for your pens, and of course, your mustangs. No matter what your horse or setup, I have tried to provide everyone with some learning tools. I have tried to keep the writing direct and short to cover as much ground as possible.

Four Basic Gentling Goals

Achieve these goals before ever putting anything on the horse, including a blanket pad, saddle, or human.

1. Movement of the horse in a direction you choose at a safe, smooth, and quiet gait with his inside hind feet crossing under the body while circling.
2. A relaxed neck and head that will flex toward you while the horse is comfortably circling as well as standing.
3. Loose feet that can be picked up for trimming or leg and foot care. There should be no kicking, tossing a foot, balking, or

moving around.

4. a. Getting the “feel” between you and your horse, made of your intent, the horse’s intent, your position in relation to the horse’s body, and your movement and distance from the horse. Without touching, you will use this feel to hold, move, and RELEASE him.

b. The feel on a rope that connects you and your horse, made up of tension and RELEASE. A floppy rope has no feel. A rope whining through your hands or pulling you off your feet as the horse and your session head for the hills has no feel either. *LET GO* if this happens, and begin where you left off. This feel will help you have control of the horse’s head and feet and leads to successful haltering.

Here are some first basic beginning methods of session work you can use towards accomplishing the basic gentling goals in future training sessions.

MOVEMENT

The horse will move freely and smoothly in a circle around you in one direction, then the other, at your request.

Do not use a pen that is too small. A 24’ square or round is the minimum-size pen. With you in the middle of the pen, you are less than 12’ away. That is barely a safe distance when you consider the horse’s instinct to flight or fight. Try to have at least one pen for work and

another where the horse lives. There needs to be secure passage between them through which you can drive the horse (very lightly) from behind, if needed.

A round pen is best to use for accomplishing the intended goal. You can train in a square pen, but the horse can stall out in a corner, turn its head away from you and its hindquarters toward you in an attempt to change direction. It is a challenge you will have to anticipate in a square pen. If you have extra panels, you can fashion them across the corners to make your square pen more round. However, it is important not to compromise the original size of your pen if it is not large enough for this. To keep you and the horse safe you will need a pen bigger than 24’ to round the corners with extra panels.

Begin by entering the pen with your eyes on the horse, always. Do not turn your back on the horse. This is a safety concern. Enter at a part of the pen where you are giving the horse space. You don’t have to cower or whisper sweet things. You are the leader; remember? Be natural and relaxed. Breathe fully. This is a work session. You are the leader, relax and lead. This does not have to be a long and hard session.

Try to move your horse while you remain in the middle of the pen. Do not chase him. If your horse comes at you, not towards you, but at you, do one of two things; get big, throw your

arms up, stomp, yell, and menace your horse away from you. At the same time, be ready to dodge away. If your horse appears to be confrontational, stay away from front feet that could strike, or hinds that could turn and kick. Be prepared and ready, but not afraid. If you are handy at carrying a lead rope, rope, or lariat in the pen, use the coils to back the horse off, too.

If your horse is sluggish or afraid, turning away or head down, get his attention by stomping, kicking dust, lightly slapping your hip, etc. The least amount of drive is best.

Move your horse in a circle around you by your position in relation to his inside shoulder. This is your horse's "balance point." Move behind the balance point, a step or so toward the horse's hindquarters and you will drive him forward. Move in front of the balance point a bit toward its head, and you will slow, stop, or even turn him. It depends, right? Work this out between you and your horse from the center of the pen, with the horse on the outside rail. You want a relaxed trot to quit this session on, or something less than a trot that is even and smooth.

There are three levels of asking your animal to move:

Request:

Your own body is up, motivated, and expecting the result. Step behind the balance point and cluck or kiss, ONE TIME. If the horse is unresponsive, DO

NOT WAIT or request again. Go directly to:

Stronger asking:

Keep your posture straight, chest out, and intent strong. Wave your "driving" arm a little, or slap your hip lightly with it. Your driving arm is your arm that is closest to the horse's hip. Point forward with your hand that is closest to the horse's head, and take a step toward the horse's hip. If the horse does not respond, move directly to:

Demand:

Slap your hip loudly. Take two or three stomps toward the hind of the horse and toward the horse on the rail. Kick dust if you have to and raise your voice.

If you are handy enough with a 14' lead rope, longer rope, or lariat, you may use this as an extension of your driving hand. Throw the end out towards the hinds of the horse as soon as he fails to respond to your demand. Gather and recoil the rope once the horse moves. If a rope is unhandy for you, you may want to think twice about using it. Use your body and your intent instead.

As soon as the horse moves; RELEASE! Go back to the center of the pen, stay slightly behind the balance point, and get the horse to stay at an even, easy trot. Relax your body, and regulate the horse's movement by your position to his balance point. If he turns around the other direction, that's OK, you

and the horse will work it out. Get it smooth one direction for a while, then the other.

You should have your goal identified prior to beginning a new training session. You also need to know when you have reached it. Once you have reached your goal, quit. Right then! The last thing the horse does is what it will remember. Quit at a good spot. Take the time to get through to a good spot if you have to. How long will it take? Again, it depends.

When your horse circles around you and you notice the inside ear cupping towards you, or his head slightly turning in and becoming relaxed and lowering, as his trot becomes more even and smooth, you have reached your goal. When your horse has achieved this, release him by backing away from the horse to the other side of the pen, relaxing your body, and letting the horse know your intent is to give him a break. This can all be done without words.

With all those things accomplished, you have achieved something with your horse. If your animal is spinning around like a top, excessively fast, you may need to re-assess your goal. If your horse is sluggish, you may have to make it move. Stay committed to your goal.

If your horse is extreme in either of these ways, achieving this goal may take more than one session. Break down your goal into smaller, more achievable steps that you will be able

to see. For a quick horse in a small square pen, you may have to get to the other side of the pen where the horse will do a smooth trot around half of the pen then look at you. It may be that the pen is too small for this energetic horse to work in and be relaxed with you in it, also. For a sluggish horse, you may have to take several threatening stomps out of the center toward its hind. Remember, horses have their own ways, too. He might be thinking he wants to be above you in the pecking order. You do not want that! So again, stay committed to your goal. Be firm, but play fair. That is very important. As soon as you reach your goal, release the animal for that day.

About "Side 2:" Make sure you reach your goal going both directions. Do Side 2, unless it has already been a long tiring session. If so, review Side 1 next session, and then move on to Side 2.

About "Release:" This is how the horse learns what to do. That is why you must quit at a good time. As soon as you and the horse have reached your goal, release it by moving to the other side of the pen. Increasing the distance between you and the horse is a BIG reward for him. Remember, right now he wants a safe distance between the two of you. Be careful with your temper. Do not let there be any left over hard feelings on your part if things don't go just right. You will cease being an effective leader if you do. Remember, when you release

the horse with your body position and distance from the horse, or with a rope, a halter and lead rope, reins or lines: it is how you show the horse what you want and that the horse has accomplished it. You need to know this and get handy at it, so you can deliver the message to the horse that he did what you asked. This is called timing.

POLING

You can get a lot done with a 10'-12' bamboo pole or other lightweight but rigid pole. Poling usually works better in a regulation square pen. Getting the horse to the pen and getting yourself safely inside are the same as for the session on Movement. The length of the pole keeps you a safe distance from the horse, and gives the horse a safety distance too, which helps calm the horse. That is how you can use the pole to do what it does best: allow the horse freedom and a safety distance, while allowing you to touch him with the pole.

You will quickly see how you can use the pole as an extension of your arms and body. Do not forget using the balance point, too. For example, if you want the horse to move up a step or two, move the pole behind it, extending it horizontally behind the horse out of kicking distance.

Sometimes the horse will come unglued when you bring in the pole. Lay it down under one of the outside panel rails while you enter the pen. Then pick it up, holding it vertically beside

you like a staff, as you move to the center of the pen. Remember, this is a work session. It is natural for your horse to be anxious at something new. Your job here is to relax, stay business like, breathe easy, and let the horse stay out on the rail, moving, and calming. The horse may find its own little zone on the rail where it is more comfortable, and rest. As long as a neighbor horse or another distraction is not present, you can start moving toward touching the horse with the pole there. Whether it is a corner or straight along a side, start with one side of the horse to you, not a head and certainly not a tail. Don't ever let that one-eye draw a bead on you.

So here you are in the center of the pen with the pole next to you, one end resting on the ground. Lift it up, hold it at the near end with both hands, extending the other end up, and out towards the rail in front of the horse. Start by making a slow arching motion back and forth high over the horse from a point about 3-6' in front of it to 3-6' behind it. This should be done two or three times. If the horse moves or bolts, let him settle. Guide him to settling with your body language and the pole. Start over until he can stay quiet on the rail while you do this. For some horses, this might be the first session, and where you would quit. It depends. If you do continue on, don't forget Side 2.

As you start another arch, slowly bring the pole closer

over the head and neck of the horse, to rest the end on his neck, just in front of the withers. This is the "sweet spot," where the mother first nuzzles the horse as a foal, and where you see horses grooming each other. The horse may flinch or bolt, but either hang in or start over. If you are coordinated enough, you can keep the pole on the horse with one hand as it moves around until it stops. This is good for the horse to learn: "It isn't killing me, and it's not going away."

A couple of other points about the pole:

1. Do not use the far end of the pole to jab or poke the horse. Use the underside of the pole to start, with the end, one or two inches over the opposite side of the horse's neck. You don't want to risk injuring the horse with the end of the pole.
2. Don't push the end of the pole to far to the outside of the horse. You can get it stuck in the panels or fencing, break the end off, or cause a ruckus. Don't worry, no one's perfect and you will get handy with this if you practice.
3. You will be having a "feel" with the horse through the pole. This feel should be light but firm. Relax your body and your hands. This might be a time to start talking softly to the horse as a comfort. You can recite the National Anthem or your shopping list if you want, just make it easy.

Your goal is to rest the pole on the sweet spot of the neck.

Don't waste time, but be sensitive to the horse. If he needs to move, just go back and start again. Make your actions relaxed and deliberate. It might look like this: You get the pole on the sweet spot for two seconds, the horse almost dances away, but you take it off and the horse stays. RELEASE! Timing! Take a couple of steps back and bring the pole to your side. Then repeat, and go for three seconds. Keep going.

When you get the pole on the sweet spot for just a second or two, start "fiddling." Move the pole back and forth towards and away from you, like a bow, with the horse's neck as the neck of the fiddle and the sweet spot as where the bow plays the strings. Remember, light but firm, don't tickle the horse, but don't wear a hole in him, either. It depends. Do this for a few seconds or as long as the horse is calm, you are calm, you can talk to him easily, and fiddle at the same time. Then, RELEASE! Remember, stop at a good spot! Take a couple of steps back. One of these times, the horse will lower his head, lick his lips, and turn his head to you. That is a sure sign: Your horse is learning.

Use the sweet spot as the safety zone for your feel of the horse. Start moving the pole as you fiddle now, a couple of inches back towards the withers, and then back to the sweet spot, and then a couple of inches forward towards the ears, and back to the sweet spot. Give your horse a release whenever it is calm. Extend your distance from

the sweet spot. Anticipate how far you can go and release back to the sweet spot before your horse gets uncomfortable and moves. You want the horse to learn that what is happening is OK. If you take him past his comfort zone a lot, he won't learn this. So again, your feel and timing will be important.

Pole the horse for a short session, and quit on a good spot. Your goal, always with a quiet horse, is to do the top line first, all the way from ears to tail and then down the back of the hind legs. Then do the underline of the neck, chest, jaw, and front of the front legs. Then get the underline at the girth, and from there down the back of the front legs and the front of the back legs. How long will this take, how many sessions? You already know the answer, don't you?

ROPE WORK

You will want to start your horse on rope work as soon as he has learned a little about movement, or poling. You should have a long enough rope to be able to toss coils from the middle of the pen over and past the outside rail of your pen. For a regulation square pen this is about 30' minimum. You can use a 50' or 60' rope or lariat in a round pen. Your goal is to have the horse move smoothly and freely or stand quietly while in contact with the rope.

Begin by letting the horse be quiet on the rail. Then put enough coils in your throwing

hand to get over his back from the center of the pen. Show him by aiming the coils in front of him that you are going to throw them there first. Just like starting with the pole out in front of him. Toss the rope out there, with little tension or energy: almost like you were casting a line in a lake. Let it drop and see what the horse does. Continue as long as the horse remains quiet. Try a few tosses behind the horse. Gradually get your tosses closer to the horse: pointing out to him with the coils first where you are going to toss them. At some point, toss the coils over his back, so several feet go over and down his other side. When he quiets, repeat. Don't forget Side 2. When the horse can stand and move quietly for a bit with the rope on his back, you are there. Remember, if you are going slower with a more anxious horse to lower your expectations for goals. Quit at a good place on any horse you work.

If you have been poling, you can "fish" for the horse. Put a non-slip loop at one end of your rope, two or three inches wide. Put a very loose clove hitch or couple of loose half hitches about five feet from this end, and put them just over the far end of the pole, so the end of the rope with the loop in it is hanging off the end of the pole. Hold the rest of the rope against the pole with your other hand, which also holds the extra slack in coils. Show the horse the pole and rope as you would at the start. Then place it on his neck, but high enough and out far

enough that you can fish the end of the rope hanging off the pole over to the outside of his body. Then "fiddle" the hitches off the end of the pole, so the rope hangs itself over the horse's neck onto the ground on his other side. Slide the end of the pole away from your horse's neck, down in front of it, to catch the loop you made in the end of the rope. Then pull it toward you. You will have the loop end of the rope in the end of the pole, and the other end in your hand with the slack. Get that loop end in your hand, and you will have both ends of the rope. You can put the pole down, and if you are quiet and agile, and the horse is relatively quiet, you now have a rope over his neck and you are holding both ends. Stand in front of his balance point a little bit, out in the center, and with enough pull to put tension on his head toward you, ask him to flex his neck in your direction. Put a couple of pounds of pull on it, and then hold steady. As soon as the horse "gives" you even just an inch of flex, RELEASE! You are teaching your horse to flex his neck toward you.

Successive sessions with the rope will move to rope work all over the body to get the horse used to such things, picking up the feet, leading by the foot, and preparation for haltering.

Notes : Short sessions more often makes more chances to practice your own movement, as well as your timing in asking of your horse and releasing him. Review : Start each session with

a faster progression through what you have taught the horse before. Don't spend as much time on it, unless you find a sticky place. You can stay on it longer, or note it and come back.

HALTERING AND TOUCHING YOUR HORSE

Don't be in too much of a hurry to halter and touch your horse. If you rush it you will turn an unsure horse into a balky, resistant horse. Take your time. Guess what, it is like raising a kid. They have to crawl first. Besides that, if you hurry, you won't appreciate the task, and the little changes you will see. Haltering is a progression through all three of the methods: movement, poling and rope work.

In this short article, I've only tried to show you beginning sessions with your horse. Here are a few things to remember:

First , never compromise your own or your horse's SAFETY for what you think will advance a training session. I believe it is quite OK to make your horse sweat if he needs to for the sake of its progress. However, your demeanor should always be one of a caring leader to this animal. If something isn't working and your horse is getting worse, drop it and come up with something else. You should always have a way, without becoming upset, that you can get to a GOOD place to quit, for both you and the horse.

Bonnie's Story

By Marlene Moss, Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Adopter



I adopted Bonnie through the internet in November 2001. I was actually looking at a flashy buckskin gelding, but the bidding went too high and I kept going back to look at this mare, anyway. I decided she was the smarter horse for me to have and bid on her. Bonnie was halter trained so when I went to pick her up, I was pleased with how she responded to the person that had worked with her. She was nervous with new people, but not panicky, and loaded into the trailer pretty easily.

Within a couple days of getting her home, winter weather hit and her run was so full of snow she could barely move. I wasn't ready to let her out with the other horses yet, so she had to deal with the fairly cramped

space of the stall and a small portion of the run for a couple of days until we could get it cleared. This made her tense and she still wasn't too sure about me and my husband yet. She would turn her hindquarters to us and tense up like she was ready to kick if she had to. This scared me a lot, so my husband and I worked on teaching her to turn toward me when asked. We found she loved her forehead rubbed and getting treats. We could pet her head, neck and shoulders, but any further and she would just tremble, but, she wouldn't move. I also learned that not all mustangs like to be patted for praise; it is more like punishment to Bonnie. Rubbing was great, but patting just put such a hurt look in Bonnie's eye. After a few weeks, we were able to let her out with the other

horses and found found she was very easy to catch; she loved the weather protection of her stall and her treats! When the snow melted enough I started taking her to the round pen. I always worked with her free to move. I wanted her to feel that if she was uncomfortable she could move away. Mostly she didn't move away, but she was still wary and we couldn't do much with her feet for a long time.

I had seen Bonnie run and buck in the pasture and I'd decided I was never going to be able ride her. She could move bigger and better than most rodeo broncs with lots of twisting and flinging of her long back and hind legs. She was a sweet horse, I really liked her conformation and since I ride endurance, I wanted to breed her to an arab. I wanted to see what the combination of solid legs, good mind, endurance and the arab athleticism and heart rate recovery could do on the trail. It didn't matter if I never rode her as long as she was happy and felt safe.

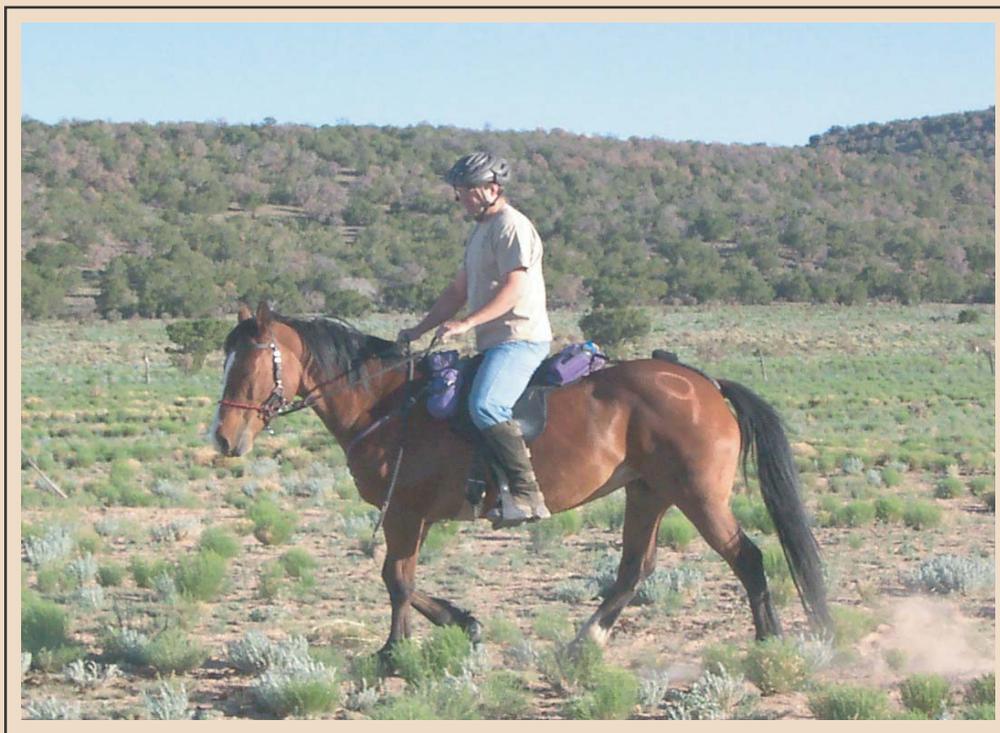
We started on ground training. I knew I would need her to accept strangers, like the vet, and she had to let us touch her all over before having her bred. We got her bred in July, 2002. By then she trusted most people and if we didn't touch her suddenly, we could handle her fairly well. She was still not good with her hind feet; I was very glad we lived on decomposed granite to help wear her feet. My husband does our farrier work and she would just

sit on him every time he went after her hind legs.

I had several other horses in competition and other than “friendly time” twice a day, Bonnie got very little work. However, every time I’d take her to the round pen to work on things, she had forgotten nothing and just picked right back up where we started. I very slowly got to where we could saddle her. Girthing was a huge deal to her and still is, but it’s getting a lot better.

In January 2003, I decided it was time to get on her back. I’d been ground driving her (she was pretty lazy, so it was tough) and putting weight in the stirrups, hanging over her back from a bucket in the stall and bumping her with my legs; nothing really bugged her. My husband held the lead rope, my mom video taped and I got on. No response whatsoever! I swear she looked at me like “what took so long?” My husband tried to lead her around after I got off and on a few times, but she would barely move. I thought, OK, fine, she still has to figure out her balance.

I got busy and she got HUGE from her pregnancy so no more thoughts of riding for a while. She delivered a huge colt in June 2003; already too tall to have an easy time nursing. Bonnie is an independent horse, doesn’t worry too much about the others and didn’t care much for “monster boy” either. She’d leave him alone as much as possible; and



now he is a very independent yearling.

Bonnie sprung back into shape about a month after weaning (happiest day of her life) and I thought it might be time to think about riding. We had moved, I didn’t have an arena, so I started back with ground driving; she still hadn’t forgotten a thing after 11 months. In January, 2004, I got on her back again; a year after the first time; and she was still nice and calm, and still wouldn’t move more than a few steps with my husband leading.

One day I went out to ride by myself; really just thinking I’d get on and off her back a couple times. But, I decided I was staying on until I could get her to move. Using my legs, which normally sets a green horse off, did nothing. Wiggling around trying to get her unbalanced did nothing. Nor did patting and

then smacking on the shoulder or hip, or taking off my jacket and swinging it. Finally, I took off the pommel strap that I had in place in case she did act up. I bumped against her shoulder. Voila! She took a couple steps. She then started backing up, just trying to feel for her balance. I let her back up half way around the round pen before asking for forward again and we started getting it. She still showed no real interest in moving.

Asking for forward all the time is hard work. So, I asked my husband to lead us around the property. We have 40 acres in the mountains and the snow was deep so I figured it would be an easy landing if I went off. Bonnie was thrilled, this is what she’d been waiting for for 2 years! She really moved out and had a good time. I took her out myself and then a couple days later we trailered her to a local park for a

short trail ride.

She was doing really well. I found she really wanted to trot down hills, probably a balance thing, but she was very competent so I wasn't afraid while we worked on learning about brakes and steering. I cantered her up a hill and it was marvelous! She was round and balanced and very easy to sit; better than most highly trained horses I've seen. I took her to an endurance clinic with a 10-mile ride; her first ride with other horses. She was ready to go with the front-runners but I kept her back. This was in April and we've been conditioning fairly regularly since.

My husband and I trailered her to Santa Fe and Bonnie did her first 25-mile endurance ride. My husband rode her because his horse was lame. She trotted very steadily for most of the ride, averaged 8mph and came in 10th. She seemed completely recovered and ready to go again about 3 hours after the ride. She was used to our steep hills so even at a longer distance and on flat ground it wasn't too much work for her.

Bonnie is really an amazing horse, brave, smart, balanced and just fun to be around. I would adopt another horse from the Ravendale herd management area in an instant. I know another endurance rider that has a mare from the same herd and she looks like Bonnie's sister, with the same calm demeanor.

That's Bonnie's story so far.

The endurance ride makes Bonnie eligible for the Mustang Performance Horse Registry. I have everything just about set up. It will be very interesting.

I will be looking to adopt another mustang soon. It really has been a great experience.

Eeyore No Longer Bad Boy on the Range

*Contributed by Debbie Driesner,
Wild Horse and Burro Adopter*



Debbie Driesner describes her adopted wild horse as a "bad boy of the range" who is now a sweet-heart. The Eeyore-Debbie story is proof there is someone for every horse.

Born in the fall of 1998, in the Ochoco Mountains of Oregon, Eeyore soon developed a bad reputation. His habitat was in a Forest Service area where his aggressive behavior as a young

stallion was disturbing to hikers and campers. He was easily identifiable on the range because of his droopy ears.

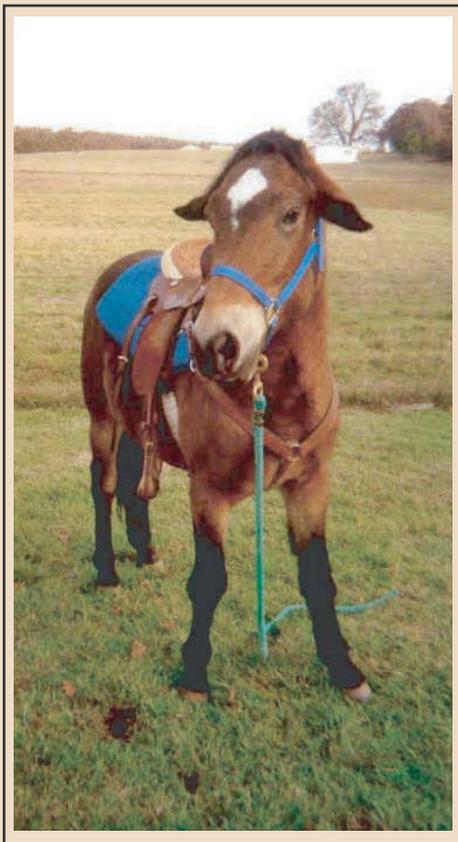
During a camping trip in the summer of 2000, Debbie Driesner of Dallas, Oregon heard the story of Eeyore, named for Winnie-the-Pooh's floppy-eared donkey pal. During this outing, Debbie made the decision that if Eeyore were removed from the range, she would take a chance and bring him home. She got her chance to make good on that decision when Eeyore was removed from the range because of overpopulation. He was transported to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)'s wild horse and burro facility in Burns, Oregon, where he received his inoculations and freeze mark and was introduced to domestic feed.

Upon visiting the Burns facility, Debbie didn't know what to expect, having never seen any pictures of Eeyore. She had many unanswered questions. "Was he as aggressive as his reputation? Could he hear? Was the rest of his body normal?" When Debbie arrived at Eeyore's corral, the horse had his backside facing visitors and his head in the feeder. Debbie saw bony hips and tailbone, a matted tail, and battle scars. She thought, "Oh my, what have I done." But, when the Eeyore turned his head and looked at her with those big soft, trusting, brown eyes, Debbie sensed that they were both hooked.

A few days later, Eeyore was enjoying the attention of his new

adopter. While he liked being brushed, having his face rubbed was the best. About those interesting ears: they are placed lower on his head and move up and down rather than swivel and have a cartilage running down the back of them. No one seems to know what caused the deformity.

Debbie says the ears do not affect Eeyore's energy and they don't diminish the fun of riding trips to the mountains or the beach or the challenge of a horse show.



Debbie notices that Eeyore seems to really like people, and they are drawn to him because of his resemblance to the storybook character for whom he is named.

Does his owner have any regrets about adopting this wild horse? Not for one moment.

The Story of #6936 and #6937

By Barbara Grozycki, New Mexico Wild Burro Adopter

When my husband Tom and I moved from the big city urban life in Houston, Texas (and the demands of our jobs), to the small city rural life in Silver City, New Mexico (and time on our hands), we both knew we would one day have animals. Oh, sure, we have always had the diminutive animal: dogs, cats, birds. We even had a pet rat once whose name was Marilyn Monroe. She was just as beautiful as her namesake was, too.

However, Silver City is the west. It's different here. Primarily because we have so much room, more space, wide-open vistas and mountains. Houston can be great, but there are no mountains there. Here, our own 100 acres has a section that borders the Gila Forest, and we like to hike around on it, so the natural flow of communication between Tom and me over a whole year's time, moved from owning the diminutive pet to owning an equine as a pack animal.

With some honest measure of uncertainty, we built a hay shed first. Satisfied and with a bit more confidence, we built a barn next to the hay shed. We bought corral panels and put them up, took them down, reconfigured them, put them back up and then reconfigured them three more times before we were satisfied. Meanwhile, we were talking to our neighbors with horses and to our neighbors with miniature donkeys. We also talked to all of our

local farm and ranch feed and supply personnel. We checked out library books on equines, purchased horse magazines, and read For Sale sections of all of our local newspapers.



Then, one day online, I went to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Wild Horse and Burro program and bingo! We liked what we saw. Yes, we could certainly have remained right here in our own city and purchased an equine. We could have adopted one from any of a number of rescue groups, and heck, we even had e-mails from people who wanted to give us animals: all kinds of animals. The BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program is one that both my husband and I admired, especially after we read more and more about its philosophy and its concern for the country's wild horses and burros still in existence and still symbolic of our Western Heritage.

In October 2003, we borrowed our neighbor's two horse trailer, drove to Arizona, bid on and

adopted two very young wild gelded jacks: #6936 and 6937.

Number 6936 became Donkey Xote, and number 6937 become Lagniappe. Xote is just a good-natured animal, rarely hesitant, eager to please, and always curious. I'm not sure about windmills (he is named after Don Quixote), but he investigates everything else he comes into contact with. The word Lagniappe is Cajun French for "a little something extra," and although we were going to adopt only one animal, #6937 was the last guy in the corral unadopted. We bid on him, too, and got our "little something extra." He's a little shy, scared, and uncertain. He has to be convinced before he proceeds, but he's learning. Xote just trusts intuitively: Lagniappe is learning to trust even though it seems to go against his nature.

Five months ago, we had no routine beyond spending massive amounts of time with them and building trust. Now, they have routines. Every single morning I halter them, let them out of the barn and into their corral, complete my barn maintenance, and feed them. After we all eat, I lead them out and tie them off. Since they are not totally tame, I still use either a chin chain on their halter or a Be-Nice halter every time I take them beyond their corral. They have come to associate the halter with walk time, so just hearing the clank makes both donkeys as happy as Pavlov's dogs. Once I've tied them, I groom them with separate brushes because Xote is woolly and Lagniappe is sleek of hair. I

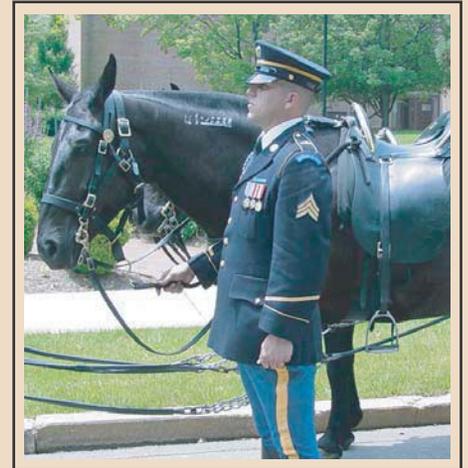
wash their eyes, nose, and muzzles with warm water, and try hard to keep them from eating their sponges. Tom and I clean their hooves every day and trim excess frog growth when necessary. They pick up their hooves with a touch from us and the command, FOOT.

For the last several weeks, we've been leading them around the property for 45 minutes to one-hour. We practice WHOA for stop, BACK for back-up, GEE, for turn right, LISTO for walk. We've yet to try a left turn, but we have been adding our coats to their backs during our walks so they get used to what that feels like. One day we will have packs on their backs instead of our coats, but that time is still in the future. The last thing Tom and I do each day is take off their halters, bring them back into the barn, and feed them.

It may not sound like much for some people, but to take two wild animals from their usual surroundings and habitat and place them with humans is a tough assignment for both animal and human. All of us have come a long way and we still have so much more to do. Tom and I sometimes talk about what we would do differently if we had it all to do again, and we both agree that we'd do the same things we did several months ago. We still look forward to early mornings with the boys, we still find ourselves eager for our walks, and we are still in love with our two adopted wild burros. We did the right thing!

THE STUNNING BLACK MUSTANG OF THE CAISSON PLATOON

By Mark Sant, BLM Archeologist, Dillon, Montana



In November 2002, I donated "Lonesome," a beautiful black mustang, to the 3rd Army Caisson Platoon, at Ft. Myer, Arlington, Virginia. Lonesome has an interesting history and background.

He was born at a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) holding facility in Butte, Montana on Oct. 12, 1995. A person in Montana originally adopted his mother, a paint wild horse from Nevada. Unfortunately, the person who adopted his mother also adopted several BLM mustang mares from Nevada. During the mandatory compliance check, the BLM became aware that the individual had adopted a lot more horses than was allowed and his facilities were not adequate to hold the number of horses he had adopted.

The BLM repossessed all of the mustang mares, most of which

had already been bred. While in the BLM holding facility, most of the mares foaled. The foals were freeze marked and adopted with their mothers. Evidently, most of these foals were a little "larger" than the usual mustang and several turned out to be paints. I think Lonesome was the only one that turned out totally black.

A BLM law enforcement officer readopted Lonesome and his mother. I first saw Lonesome when he was almost two, and he was quite a looker then. Our law enforcement officer had him until he was four, but really did not have enough time to train him. As a result, I bought him. I had Lonesome for several years, doing some packing and trail riding. He turned out to be really smart and have a great personality. As you can see from his pictures, Lonesome turned out to be "a lot" of horse. He was a little big for a packhorse, and almost too big to get through some of the overgrown backcountry trails I ride.

When I heard the Army was looking for large black mustangs for their Caisson Platoon, I could not think of a greater personal honor than to have my horse be part of that prestigious team. I worked out the details with the Army and donated Lonesome to the platoon.

Lonesome serves both as a near and off horse in the lead and swing positions in the 3rd Army's Caisson Platoon. A near horse is the horse on the left that is ridden and the off horse is the horse on the left. The lead horses

are the front pair of horses while in draft, and the swing team is the middle team. Lonesome, the stunning black mustang of the Caisson Platoon, has participated in over 500 funerals as well as the funeral for former President Ronald W. Reagan, and the 55th Inaugural Parade.

Lonesome has turned out to be a wonderful ambassador for the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program as well as a beautiful, well-trained and loved member of the Third Army's Caisson Platoon.

SOMBRA'S REINING SHOW

By Melissa Scott, Wild Horse Adopter



Melissa Scott adopted a yearling Kiger stud from the January 2000 internet adoption. Sombra is now a Mustang Ambassador that has

been invited to the Kentucky Horse Park every July for the last four years. He also represents the BLM at adoptions and Equine Fairs throughout the east. Below is Melissa's story about her first National Reined Horse Association competition with her wild mustang, Sombra.

To rein a horse is not only to guide him, but also to control his every movement. The past two and a half years have been spent with Sombra working on a solid foundation. After all the schooling and riding I felt that it was time to challenge Sombra and myself in a competitive show ring atmosphere, and what better place than a National Reining Horse Show.

Saturday morning started very early. I was up at 4:00 a.m. and out feeding and cleaning stalls by 4:30. We loaded Sombra on the trailer at 6:00 a.m. and left for an hour and twenty minute trip to Roan State Community College in Harriman, Tennessee, where the Tennessee National Reined Horse Association Mid-Winter Slip 'n Slide Reining horse show was held. Upon pulling into the parking lot, I became very intimidated by the very large nice trailers parked around the barns and arena.

The show was scheduled to start at 8:00 a.m. I didn't have much time to fill out paperwork, tack up, and warm Sombra up. I was a nervous wreck. It was getting close to show time as we entered the large indoor arena.

I entered the Green Horse class, the second class of the morning. This is for horses that have not yet earned National Reined Horse Association money.

Sombra was the only horse in the class that was competing for the first time. There were five horses in all. Sombra and I were second to compete. The pattern assigned for the class was number 10.

Everyone took their turn and waited for the final scores and placement. I was so very excited when I thought I heard that I tied for third. When I realized I had actually tied for first, I was very surprised and very happy. We had the option to run the pattern again or flip a coin for first place. We decided to flip the coin. I called heads and won! My score was 62.5 with 70 being a perfect score.

In conclusion, it was a very rewarding experience. I feel the most important aspect of Sombra's performance was his calm and willing attitude through the entire pattern. He performed all maneuvers slowly and correctly. Some of the other horses had more talent, but were not consistent in maneuvers and overall performance.

An interesting thing happened while I was at the event. Another competitor made a comment that I should cover up Sombras BLM freemark as a mustang would never be allowed to place well. I guess we proved him wrong. Mustangs do not specialize in one specific discipline, but can hold their own in many different endeavors and get the job done.

Ain't Much of a Horse

By Jean Rowell, Hattiesburg, MS
Wild Horse Adopter

Now that we've had this mustang in our lives for over two years, and are over the "oooooh" and "awe" of mustang ownership, I have to admit, she just ain't much of a horse.

There she stands in the pasture, nose to the horizon, tuning into who knows what, while the other horses are all about getting our attention to the fact that it is dinner time. Even though we have put several hundred pounds on her, she still has a blade-thin chest. If she stands hip-shot just a certain way, those hipbones poke out so you would swear we are starving her. Nothing like my AQHA mare, who is bulldog built and brings to mind the song "Brickhouse." We did not choose her for color; she is just an ol' bay with some white on her feet and a couple of ink-drops of black around her hooves. Nothing like our APHA medicine-hat paint with his stunning markings. Her mane appears to have been roached to apply the freeze-brand, as it is long behind her ears and long at her withers, but it has never grown out along the neck, due to her constantly sticking her head through our barbed wire for grazing. She self-trims that mid-part in a most aggravating way, and I probably should just cut the whole thing.

I brought her to my trainer friend after 18 months of "gentling and bonding." Way, way too long according to most of my horsey

(non-mustang) friends. I took my time on the ground work and did a little riding time and training on my own, but wanted someone a little more saddle-wise than me to carry on her riding experience. He, being used to starting AQHA colts and readying them for the cutting trainer or the reining trainer, really did not know how to talk to me that first week he had her. He tried to be gentle. "Ah," he began, "Well, she has been calmer than I thought she would." Long pause. "Um, she really doesn't seem to have, uh, much, uh, what I would call, eh, athletic ability." To make a long story short, she would freeze, and get tangled up in her own feet. Well, six months and many trail rides later, she still has a tendency to cross her feet, and this ain't for sidepassing either. She will never be a dancer.

Two years into it, and a fairly decent trainer to boot, and she still has her moments. All of a sudden refuses to be led through the barn. Winces at me (Moi! Her best pal and most trusted human!) simply because I have a plate of food in my hand. Sulls up and refuses to load after many, many good loading experiences. Trips over her own feet. Who knows what is going to happen tomorrow when the vet comes to pull blood for a coggins test? So, all in all, I'm sitting here squinching up my face, shaking my head from side to side, thinking, well, this ain't much of a horse! If we had known more before we went to adopt . . . if we had done more mustang research . . . if we had not had "adopter tunnel vision" that day . . . if we had gone for color or

conformation rather than searching for the "right" look in the eye . . .

But wait a minute! This is the horse, who, while still wild and untouchable, heaved a heavy sigh and laid her jaw dead into the palm of my hand on one glorious mustang-bonding morning. This is the horse, who could not be touched by the farrier, but who let me pick up all four feet, sans halter, out in the middle of the pasture at sunset one day.

This is the horse, who, on the third day we had her, followed a three year old child around and took carrots out of his hand, as gentle as could be. This is the horse who never bolted or snorted the first time at all of our dogs. This is the horse who stood over me, after I hit the ground through no fault of her own, with the most curious look on her face. This is the horse who has overcome more fear than any domestic horse we have ever known, and just gotten better and better.

This horse. This horse. This is the horse who tuned into my soul. This is the horse who taught me more about my own "horse abilities" than any other horse I have ever had.

This is the horse that taught me to think outside of myself. This is the horse who has convinced an entire neighborhood that "this could be done." And this is the horse that I will be riding for many years to come.

Clumsy feet, thin chest, sully moments, ugly hipbones, and all.

BLM Preparation and Adoption Facilities

The National Wild Horse and Burro Center at Palomino Valley

By Janet Neal, Public Outreach Coordinator, BLM National Marketing Team



The National Wild Horse and Burro Center at Palomino Valley (PVC) in Reno, Nevada is the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) largest wild horse and burro preparation facility. Officially established in April 1977, the facility, situated on 148.51 acres, has the capacity to hold and prepare approximately 2,000 wild horses and burros for adoption.

John Neill, Manager of PVC, oversees all operations performed at the facility. John directs and supervises eleven employees at the facility: one assistant manager, one administrative assistant, one adoption clerk, one lead horse wrangler, two maintenance workers, two animal caretakers, and three horse wranglers.

PVC was designed to prepare wild horses and burros, gathered from over-populated rangelands, for adoption by the public. After a state brand inspection, animals receive an identification number or freeze mark, vaccinations are administered, their age is determined, and they are categorized by age and sex in preparation for adoption. A blood sample is drawn for Coggins testing (Equine Infectious Anemia). In addition, all of the animals gathered from the public rangelands receive vaccinations against rabies and West Nile virus. On occasion, PVC will also draw blood for genetic testing; however, this task is typically performed at the gather location.

From 1977 to February 2005, PVC has received and prepared about 100,000 wild horses and burros gathered from the range. Temporary adoption sites located in the Eastern United States have received several thousand animals from PVC for adoptions to the public.

Throughout the year, as long as animals are available, PVC accepts appointments to adopt a wild horse or burro directly from the facility, where you have the best and widest selection from which to choose. Adoptions are held on a first-come, first-served basis. Periodically, the National Center holds scheduled adoption events at the facility. A competitive bidding process is used for these adoption events.

Please visit www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov for a complete listing of adoptions throughout the United States. For more information on the facility, or to schedule an appointment to adopt, please call (775) 475-2222.