

New regulations passed on wild horses, burros

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management has published stringent and far-reaching new regulations governing its wild horse and burros management program, according to Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus.

The regulations apply only to wild, free-roaming horses and burros on public lands managed by BLM. Unless they stray from BLM-managed lands, animals on other federally owned lands are subject to legislation specifically pertaining to those lands, such as elements of the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Appearing in the Federal Register on December 28, 1979, the final regulations include prohibited acts relating to inhuman treatment, commercial exploitation and other abuses of wild horses and burros following adoption through BLM's Adopt-A-Horse program. Violators are subject to a maximum fine of \$2000 or one year of imprisonment, or both.

Procedures for individuals, organizations and government agencies to obtain title to adopted animals, after one year or proper care, are also announced in this final rulemaking. When ownership is transferred from the Federal Government to an adopter, horses and burros will lose their legal wild, free-roaming status.

The final regulations also include new procedures BLM will follow in its protection, management and humane treatment of wild horses and burros on the rangelands and during capture and placement through the adoption system.

The final regulations implement amendments to the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act which

were contained in the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of October 1978. Their effective date is 30 days following publication.

Illegal acts against wild horses and burros in the past were confined to unauthorized removal from the public lands, and their slaughter, harassment, sale, or conversion to private use or into commercial products. These prohibited acts have been expanded to include:

Inhumane treatment following adoption. Inhumane treatment is defined as "causing physical stress to an animal through any harmful action or omission that is not compatible with standard animal husbandry practices; causing or allowing an animal to suffer from a lack of necessary food, water or shelter; using any equipment, apparatus or technique during transportation, domestication or handling that causes undue injury to an animal; or failing to treat or care for a sick or injured animal."

Abandonment of an adopted wild and free-roaming horse or burro without making arrangements for food, water and shelter;

Destruction or alteration of an animal's official identification mark;

Use of an adopted animal for commercial exploitation or bucking stock;

Failure to notify BLM with seven days of the death of an adopted animal;

Failure to make a diligent attempt to capture an escaped adopted animal;

Failure, upon written notice, to produce an adopted animal for inspection;

The sale, directly or indirectly, of an animal or its remains, which has not lost its status as wild and free-roaming;

Acceptance for slaughter or destruction of a horse or

burro bearing an official BLM identification mark and not accompanied by an official certificate of title;

Failure by the acceptor of a horse or burro for slaughter or destruction to retain for one year the certificate of title to the animal.

Until passage of the Public Rangelands Improvement Act, adopted wild horse and burros remained wards of the Federal Government for their lifetime. PRIA now permits BLM to transfer title to up to four animals a year to adopters who have provided one year of humane treatment and care.

The final regulations specify that applicants must be of legal age in the State where they live, and the

official BLM application for transfer of title must include a written statement by a licensed veterinarian certifying that proper care has been provided during the preceding year.

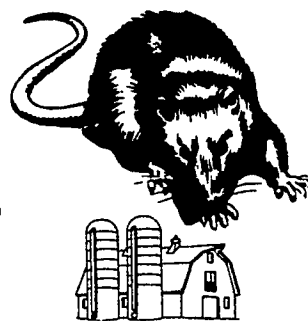
Title may be obtained to horses and burros adopted since December 1971. More than 15,000 horses and burros are now being cared for by some 5500 individuals.

The final regulations also implement the provision of the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 that limits the number of animals a person can adopt in a year. The maximum is four, unless an authorized BLM officer justifies, in writing, that the applicant is capable of humanely transporting and caring for additional animals.

Going beyond setting regulations to protect wild horses and burros placed in adoption, the rulemaking sets a new policy for BLM in its on-the-ground management of the animals. In the future, wild horses and burros will be con-

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