

Wild Horse And Burro Adoption Center Finds Homes For 70 Animals

BY SALLY BAIR
Lancaster County
Correspondent

LEWISBERRY — Over 70 burros and horses were available for adoption last week at the Northeast Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Center in Lewisberry. Many of the those who visited during a special two-day open house went home with a new horse or burro to love—and to tame.

The horses and burros, trucked here from the western part of the country, are part of a continuing resource management plan by the Department of the Interior. Adoption is a partial solution to the problem of overpopulation among the wild herds that roam public rangelands.

Curt Jones, director of the Eastern States Office of the Bureau of Land Management, explains, "Nothing can compete with them in the wild." Charlie Most, chief of public affairs, adds, "They have no natural enemies."

However, the animals must share the limited forage and water with other native wildlife and their numbers are often more than the land can support.

Because of this, the animals, who are very prolific, are gathered in an "ongoing process." Horses come primarily from Nevada, Wyoming, Oregon and California. Horses coming from Nevada are traditionally the smallest because of genetics and the pressure on the available resources. They are descendants of the Spanish bred

horses. Jones notes, "Pure Mustangs are the size of Nevada horses." Those horses coming from Montana and Wyoming generally are somewhat larger in size.

The burros are corraled mostly from Arizona and California, and while the horses are available for adoption year round, burros are not, Jones says, "This will be the last of the burros for the year."

Surprisingly, it is the burros for whom demand is the largest. Jones says many burro adopters are older people who may be retired and own some land and want them for a pet. He added, "Some truck farmers want burros because they can plant the rows closer together and the burros won't step on the crops."

Burros are also useful to some sheep farmers because they are "very protective" and will keep away wild dogs and coyotes.

Jones notes that there is a waiting list for burros. Information distributed also notes that the Department of the Interior prefers to have the burros adopted in pairs. Burros can be adopted for \$75 whereas the adoption fee for horses is \$125. This fee covers the cost of roundup, inoculations, veterinary care and other expenses of the program.

Jones said that applicants for adoption are screened and the title is not given to them until after a successful first year. People are allowed to adopt up to four animals in one year. He said, "Most are



These are some of the 70 burros that were offered for adoption at the Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Center at Lewisberry last Saturday. They prefer the burros be adopted in pairs.

good folks. Our adopters feel a sense of commitment. It's refreshing to have that kind of public support."

Most also notes that few people ever request that the government take back on animal. In fact, many people who have worked with both domestic and wild horses find the wild horses easier to work with. Jones says, "They've been raised in the wild, and if you are good with them, kind and gentle, they are like a dog. They become very loyal. Most people do a great job with them."

The program has been in effect for about 10 years, though it has only been in the last four that the adoption centers have been established. During that time about 65,000 burros and horses have been relocated, with about 40 to 45 percent of them being adopted east of the Mississippi.

In the west the animals are usually adopted right after the roundup on public lands. Jones concluded, "There is an awful lot of interest in the program." Interest in the East is different from the West because there they see

the animals as a nuisance.

Jones believes this program's uniqueness builds bridges for the department and has garnered a lot of support from the states. This working together is beneficial to everyone involved.

About 30 to 50 animals are on hand at the adoption center around the year, and new shipments come in periodically. Often "satellite" programs are held and horses and burros will be taken to temporary shelters in other states to take them close to the potential adopters.

Turtle Soup Connoisseur Brews Tasty Delicacy

BY SALLY BAIR
Lancaster Co. Correspondent

LEWISBERRY — Even as a child James Payne admits that he "always liked to throw something together to eat. Even if it didn't look good, I ate it."

Last Saturday, Payne, known to his friends as "Mike," was throwing together his annual batch of turtle soup, a delicacy which has become something of a staple at the Wild Horse and Burro Open

House on the Goodlander Ranch near Lewisberry.

While Payne takes the job seriously enough, he actually is quite casual in putting together the ingredients. He said that he's been making the soup himself for about 20 years, but it's only in the last six years that he wrote down the recipe.

When preparing soup, you want to have plenty of time, especially over the open fire which is Payne's

preferred way of doing it. Payne says, "I think anything tastes better when it's made over the open fire. It has a better taste."

Actually, the other reason making the soup takes time is the turtle catching. Some of the eight turtles for this year's soup were caught in mid-August; they all were caught on the pond on the property. Payne makes it sound simple to catch them — you tie some bait on a line with a hook, leave it overnight and get your turtle the next morning.

George Craker, who called himself a "migrant worker" as he helped with some of the vegetable chopping this year, said jokingly, "Then you throw away the turtle and keep the bait."

Payne has a technique for preparing the turtles for cooking, and says the process takes him about ½ hour. The next step is cooking the meat in water until the meat is tender and ready to fall off the bones. Once cooked, it is removed from the broth, carefully picked off the bones and put through a grinder.

He said, "All the meat on a turtle is good. The neck meat is all white meat."

As the turtles cook, Payne slowly works at chopping the rest of the ingredients. This year he had some good help in Craker and Gene Hetrick, so the chopping got done more quickly. Hetrick says dryly, "He never had such experienced help before." He adds, "The pay's very good." Craker deadpans, "A guy could get pretty proficient at this."

They cut the carrots, celery, onions and potatoes into small pieces and add the ingredients as they are cut to the steaming broth. Hetrick takes time to stir the soup occasionally, and both men take a break to chop wood to keep the fire going.

Observers stop and ask what the men are doing. Others, those in the know, begin saying, "When will it be ready to eat?" Someone asks, "Is it going to be as good as last year?" Without hesitation and with a laugh, Payne replies, "Better." One little girl looked in and asked



Gene Hetrick takes a turn stirring the turtle soup as it cooks over an open fire.

where the turtle was. When asked if she'd try the soup she disgustedly said 'no' and moved away. One woman stopped and told Payne how she makes her turtle soup, adding just corn.

As noon approaches Payne decides it's time to taste the product. He admits that he flavors it to his taste which may not suit others. But he figures they can always add salt and pepper. "Some people like more than I do. If they want more, they'll have to put it in. You can't suit everybody."

Just before pronouncing it

ready, Payne says, "I think I got it all in. I'd better check." Then he takes out the newly written recipe and makes sure everything has been added. He realizes he almost forgot the hard cooked eggs, and quickly mashes them and puts them in the boiling soup.

The whole process takes about 5 hours, and when the soup is ready it is sold in about one hour. Payne remarked proudly, "One year it was gone in about 40 minutes."

Before giving the soup over to the food stand to sell, Payne ladles some into large containers to take

(Turn to Page B16)



Mike Payne adds the ground turtle meat to the soup as it nears completion. The total process takes approximately 5 hours.