

A Wild Horse Gather in Oregon

The Day the Adventure Begins

By Connie Deller

The setting was a very scenic, winter wonderland in the high desert of eastern Oregon. The



peacefulness of the clear, crisp, winter air was refreshing for the soul of both man and beast. Evening fog had turned to morning frost covering the sagebrush and stretching as far as the eye could see. Warmth of the early morning sun was a welcome feeling and provided a beautiful sight as it began to light up the awesomeness of majestic Steens Mountain in the distance.

The gathering crew made final preparations on the capture site and holding pens for the Coyote Lakes gather which was about to begin. It was as though man and nature were waiting in eager anticipation of the activity soon to be taking place in that remote part of the desert. The sound of a helicopter could be heard in the distance and was the signal that the horses were on their way. The crew read the unspoken signal and dispersed to their assigned locations around the trap to hide from the unsuspecting horses coming in.

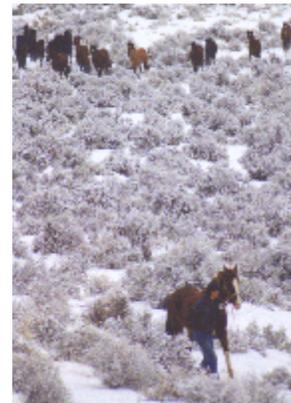


As the herd of horses approached the corral, with the helicopter trailing them, you could see their



breath in the cold morning air and hear the sound of their running hooves crunching in the frozen snow. A group of nearly 30 horses followed the big bay lead mare. Five mustangs tried to veer away from the main herd of approaching horses, but the helicopter swung over to block their escape and coax them back to the group that was galloping toward the capture corral. As they approached the jute

wings that led up to the gate, the pilot maneuvered his aircraft back and forth behind the herd somewhat like a well-trained border collie herding a band of sheep into a pen. For a moment time stood still as the crew waited anxiously to see if the horses would all find their way into the wings and up through the gate that would mark the beginning of their new lives.



Within seconds the horses were galloping through the gate, wranglers following quickly behind them to ensure that they all made it in and to close the gate securely behind them. Moments later the helicopter was on the ground, props slowly winding down. Soon all was quiet again except for the fast-paced breathing of the newly-captured horses. The adventure they were about to begin would offer many new experiences as they embarked on their journey to the families that would eventually become their lifelong friends.



If you would like to become a lifelong friend of a newly-gathered wild horse from Oregon, you may contact the Bureau of Land Management, Burns District Office, HC 74-12533 Hwy 20 West, Hines, OR 97738 or call (541) 573-4400 or visit our website at www.or.blm.gov/Burns. To find out more about the Adopt-A-Horse Program in other areas, call 1-800-4-mustangs or visit the website at www.adoptahorse.blm.gov.