



Issue 4

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**Official National Newsletter of the Wild Horse and Burro Program**



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**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
National Wild Horse and Burro Program**

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*If you would like to submit articles for the National Wild Horse and Burro News, please e-mail articles and photos (at least 300 dpi) to [Janet\\_Neal@blm.gov](mailto:Janet_Neal@blm.gov) or mail to Janet Neal, Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 12000, Reno, NV 89520, Phone 775-861-6614.*

**Sally Spencer, Marketing Director**

**Janet Neal, Editor and Graphic Artist**



## American Glory

By Candy Haasch, Wild Horse Adopter

I adopted a seven year-old mare in the late nineties for my stepson. He was spending way too much money on cars to have much left over for horses. I told him getting a BLM mustang was the most inexpensive way I knew of to obtain a horse of sound mind and body but that we'd have to invest quite a bit of time and tenderness gentling a wild one.

After seven months and still not ready to let me on her back, I wondered if I had bitten off more than I could chew. I am a fairly savvy horse trainer. Jimmy staunchly stated it didn't matter to him if he could ever ride her at all. He would still love her for the rest of her life and not to hurry her.

What a success story "Glory" turned out to be!

I remember the first day at the wild horse adoption Jimmy and I attended. There were so many excellent horses to choose from. We wanted to make sure we selected the right horse for us and what we hoped to do with her. We talked to a wonderful BLM employee that heartily slapped Jimmy on the back and said, "She'll be a great working man's horse son!"

We got her fully fattened up and healed. She had several wounds on her body, twenty to be exact. Believe me I know how many there were. It was quite an ordeal to get close enough to doctor her every day! She did finally "turn the corner" to become an incredible mount.

Jimmy ended up having several wonderful trail-riding years with her and she presented us with a fine grulla filly. Then Jimmy went off to college. He wrote a theme about gentling a mustang and received an "A" on it in class. He talked about his love for mustangs, both the car and the real live kind. American Glory remained in our pasture, quiet and gentle enough for even a little nine year-old to ride.

Enter Emily Wood! It was love at first sight between her and Glory. I was torn at the idea of selling Glory but the photos tell it all.



Jim Haasch with his favorite Mustang!

Have you ever seen a horse smile as broadly as her rider?

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Whoever would dream that Glory would turn out to be a Short Stirrup Hunter winning championship after championship and even at A-rated shows and now moving up this year to winning ribbons even in Hopeful Jumper with Emily not yet twelve!

American Glory would like to thank Emily's Mom, Susan Wood, a grand horsewoman in her own right and Amy Hunter-Clark of Huntington Farms, Viroqua, WI, hunter jumper trainer and rider extraordinaire.

But credit most of all to the BLM for making little girls and not-so-little boys and even fat old-grey-haired moms dreams come true.



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Thank you from American Glory. BLM #1412.



## **Building Success and Having Fun**

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

In this fourth article on gentling your mustang, you should be able to halter your horse fairly easily. You are leading and ground driving him, getting basic movement both on the lead line and at liberty in the direction you choose. You can approach your horse, be near him, lift up his feet, and hold them if not trim them. Now we will talk about the opportunity to advance your horse's learning and approach which might be the most important goal of mustang training: your human and horse relationship. Like any of your other relationships, you want it to be as much fun as possible for both of you. Here are the previous three articles for review:

<http://www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov/news/winter2005/depends.html>

<http://www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov/news/spring2006/moving.html>

<http://www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov/news/summer2007/together.html>

### ***Movement at Liberty***

Review your four kinds of turns in the round pen, asking your horse to move as softly and smoothly as possible. Change gaits between walk, jog, and trot, and ask for outside and inside turns as discussed in previous articles. Use your body position, body language, and gestures to help. Use a lariat, training stick, or small whip to extend your arm if you need to. Try to keep everything soft. This is a short period of review unless you have to review for success. Do it with a smile on your face and a relaxed attitude.

Fun tip #1: refine your decisions on turns and gaits. Mix them up for the horse. Make it as far from routine as possible. Watch your horse, and get him past any anticipating he does with your requests. Focus on your leadership, and have fun playing with him. Play like you want to fool him, but always help him to be right, too. Make him think and give him success at the same time. It will do wonders for both of you.

Fun tip #2: bring one or more "interesting" obstacles into the round pen. Make sure they are not too frightful for your horse. If he shies and bounces off the panels, you have a choice: take the obstacle out or put it on the opposite side of the round pen from him. Then relax and let him check it out. When you have an obstacle that he can be with in the round pen, start some simple movement exercises with him.

You can do all kinds of things depending on your connection with the horse. If it is a ground obstacle like a pole or rope you can ask him to go up to it, smell it, touch it, or walk over it. If it is a standing obstacle like a ball, cone, barrel, or chair, you can put it far enough away from the rail that the horse can move around between it. Don't crowd him with it. Remember this is fun and horses are claustrophobic by nature. Just ask him to take a direction and a gait and have fun with it. Ask him to stop in between just before passing, etc. You can also put it out in the middle and create movement to, from, or around it. You can ask him to come up to it slowly also. This is where you practice your

communication skills. If he knows you are light and soft, you can both have some fun. If he just stops and looks at you reward him. He is looking to you as the leader!

Do these activities for relatively short periods. Take breaks in between and do a lot of rubbing and stroking of your horse in his favorite places. That helps him get with you, too, and you with him. Make sure you quit when your horse is quiet and comfortable. You will be rewarded by the fun, the connection, and the improved respect for your leadership.

### ***Rope, Halter, and Lead Work***

Now you will connect with your horse through movement and quiet activity on the halter and with a soft cotton rope.

Haltering: Review getting the horse to put his nose in the halter. When you are both relaxed and comfortable, tie or buckle the halter in place. Then take it off and repeat several times and in several different places, but always in an enclosure of some sort. Give him nice strokes each time he stands quietly.

Task #1: backing up. Backing up is ground driving the horse backwards. This is important in the control of your horse. From at least five feet in front of your horse, and on a slack lead line, face your horse and lean towards him. Point to his eyes with your hand that is holding the lead line and using your position ask him to move back. If he doesn't move, wiggle your wrists so the lead line wiggles. If he still doesn't move, wiggle your arm up to your elbow. Finally, if he still doesn't move, wiggle the lead line with your whole arm. As soon as you see him start to take one backwards step, release. Then see if you can get him to go with just a finger pointing or a light wiggle. In succeeding sessions increase the number of steps back he takes. In any situation, wiggle the lead line any time you need your horse to back up or move away from you.

Task #2: ground driving forward with a purpose. Review ground driving with your horse as described in the Summer 2007 newsletter article. Bring objects like the ones mentioned in the section above to make ground driving more interesting for you and your horse. Ask him to ground drive forward or backward across ground poles, or to "touch" a cone, or touch or roll a pilates ball or a plastic barrel. Step ahead of his shoulder to slow him down or stop him. Step behind his shoulder to ask him to go. Have fun!

Task #3: rope work. Continue to get your horse comfortable with the rope all over his body. Take short breaks and release him any time he is quiet and comfortable when you toss the rope on his back, over his head, etc. Once he can handle it, be as creative as possible. Don't put too much stress or concern on him at this point. Gradually increase all the places you can get to with the rope. Then put the rope down, and stroke him all over with your hand. Alternate this kind of activity in a session with movement-type activities.

Task #4: two people close while on the lead line. This will be important for farrier, veterinary, and any other activity that will take more than one person. Only gradually introduce the second person to this activity using approach and release. As your horse can handle the second person closer, one person remains the handler of the horse at the

horse's head. The other person comes to the horse in the horse's safest place near the head to touch him with the back of his hand and release. Gradually increase the time with the horse for the second person rubbing him all over in long, smooth, firm strokes. Both people should always be on the same side of the horse. See "Foot Work" section below.

Task #5: review leading: As grazers, or prey animals with eyes on the sides of their heads, horses move from one side to another in the general direction they are going. To lead your horse, bring his head lightly to one side until he is almost off balance enough to need to take a step. When he steps, release! Put float in the rope and reward him. Take a couple steps forward and see if he follows you. In this way gradually increase the number of steps he takes with you. Don't get into a pulling contest. Instead, come back to asking his head to come over to one side until he walks forward in that direction. Take success in small steps.

Hint: get a helper if the first notion of your horse is to resist or back up. Position your helper behind the horse at least 10 feet and when you sense the lack of movement, ask your helper to *gently* tap his hip gradually increasing his energy until *just before* the horse moves forward, then release. As the horse moves forward more easily have the helper drop further and further back from the horse until the horse "gets it."

### ***Foot Work***

Review lifting your horse's feet from the previous articles. When your horse is able to hold his feet in your hand comfortably gradually increase his exposure to sounds and feels. Rub his foot on your jeans briefly then add time to that. Move it back and forth with both of your hands. **ONLY** play with your horse's foot and leg like this if he is comfortable and then just a little at a time. You can slap his foot a couple of times put it on your knee between your legs, etc. Do this **ONLY** if your horse is comfortable and for very short periods of time. Finally, if you have farrier tools, lightly rasp the sole of his foot and then increase the time and attention you give the foot.

Now use what you practiced in Task #4 above with a handler to practice lifting the feet. Make sure to do this in small rewarded steps.

The horse handler stays at the horse's head on a loose but short lead. Keep the horse's head lightly turned to the side you are working on with the other person. **ALWAYS** stay on the same side with the other person.



Your object now is to go beyond your review of basics to make your horse more and more comfortable for the things you both want to do and have to do to promote his health, welfare, and happiness. The better you get at it, the happier you will be too. The more fun you have the better it will be for both of you. With that in mind, I wish you both easy going!

Rob Pliskin, right, at Wild Horse Workshop, 2000

Mr. Pliskin has offered his training services to the National Wild Horse and Burro News. If you have any questions, problems or concerns with your wild horse or burro, Rob's e-mail address is [robp18@earthlink.net](mailto:robp18@earthlink.net). Rob will try to answer all of your questions, however, you know; "It depends". Any questions and answers will be posted in the next issue of the National Wild Horse and Burro News.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) does not advocate or actively support any specific wild horse or burro trainer. As with most professions, there are several different techniques with the same results achieved. The BLM is offering Mr. Pliskin's advice as a guide or a road map for beginning training techniques for your newly adopted wild horse.

If you are a wild horse and/or burro trainer or adopter and have information you would like shared with the public, please e-mail it to the newsletter editor, [Janet\\_Neal@blm.gov](mailto:Janet_Neal@blm.gov), or send via U. S. Mail to Janet Neal – Newsletter, BLM, and P.O. Box 12000, Reno, NV 89520-0006. In addition, if you are a wild horse or burro trainer and would like your name added to the BLM's training list, Janet can be reached at the above e-mail address or you may phone her at (775) 861-6614.

The BLM reserves the right to publish or not publish any information received.



## Mustang Sally

**By Leah Lovell, VA Mustang Owner**

Mustang Sally came to us about 2 years ago. Her owner had died and there was no one to take care of her. So the man that was trying to tend to her needs gave her to us. We have never owned a mustang before but have known people that had and dearly loved them. She blended in well with our small herd.



Mustang Sally in the Lead

Sally is the low man (or should I say low girl) on the totem pole. My mule Susie Q was and now she thinks she is a big shot over Sally.

Sally is just a wonderful horse. She dearly loves my husband Kenny. Sally is similar to our mule and is much safer than the other horses on the trails. There's probably no need to explain why.

Sally picks her way through situations always thinking and planning the best way. Sally does not run through things nor is she keen on rushing into things and we don't push her into what she feels is not safe. If you give her a little time, she will get you through any situation safely. She does not get excited or get in a hurry. Sally plays no games, doesn't act silly and is always very serious in her work.

I told Kenny that if any of our animals leave our home, it would not be Mustang Sally.

Her job for now is carrying Kenny or being led with packs. She is truly a champ and definitely a keeper. We love her dearly.



## Alaska

By Natalie Porter, Mustang Adopter



Alaska After Grooming

My husband and I went to a Wild Horse and Burro Adoption in Benton, Arkansas. We started looking at all the wild horses. There were so many to choose from! I had picked about 3 horses that I thought were really nice looking. I was particularly interested in a white, muddy, matted mane and tail girl. I decided she was the one.



Alaska before grooming

She was my first mustang. I adopted her in March 2006. My husband and I named her Alaska. She was removed from the public rangelands in Wyoming due to inadequate water and food sources. She came from the Adobe Town Herd Management Area.

I took my newly adopted 5 year-old mustang mare home. At first, I just talked to her. I knew I had to be careful because she was very afraid of me and quite pregnant. Every day I would talk to her and sometimes I read her a book. She started coming closer but was still very unsure of me. I began feeding her grain out of my hand. She would take it and then run off. It was like this for about 2 months. Then she had her baby, a beautiful colt. After that, she would not come near me at all. I had to start all over again. This went on for 4 months.

I called the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and told the person I talked to that I was going to have to relinquish her. The BLM employee gave me the name of a lady that she thought could help me. I was so happy because I really did not want to lose my mustang. So, I called her. Her name was Margaret Mays.

Margaret told me to turn my back to her and try to get closer every day and call her back in a week. After the week, I called her back. It had not worked. She came to my home and took Alaska to her house. One week later she brought her back to me. I could not believe this was my beloved mustang. My wonderful wild horse came home to me.

She was so white and beautiful. When I saw Alaska I just cried. I was so happy. I could touch her and brush her hair. I was on cloud nine.



I was so glad I had called the BLM and they could offer me assistance by providing the name of someone that could help Alaska so much. Margaret turned my mustang into a wonderful friend. Without her help and BLM's assistance, I would not have my mustang today! I can do everything with Alaska now and have started riding her.

Natalie Porter Riding Alaska



## Vet's Corner

**By Albert J. Kane, DVM, MPVM, PhD**

*Dr. Al Kane works for the United States Department of Agriculture as a veterinary advisor for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Wild Horse and Burro Program. The information, ideas, and opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United States Departments of Agriculture or Interior.*

### **Winterizing Your Wild Horse or Burro**

The leaves have turned and the air is crisp with the feel of winter. Those of us who live in temperate climates would never forget to think ahead about our antifreeze, snow tires, chains, and various winter emergency supplies for the truck. Now is also the time to think about preparing your wild horses and burros for a healthy and safe winter.

Just because temperatures may be below freezing and snow may be in the air does not mean you have to pack away your wild horses or burros until spring and give up enjoying them for the winter. Horses and burros adapt very well to the cold and snow if given a little time and help. In fact, they are usually happier and better off outdoors as much as possible and not cooped up in an artificially warm barn or buried under a pile of blankets. The hair coat of a mustang or burro is excellent protection from even the harshest winter elements as long as they can stay dry and out of the wind. Their coat gets longer and thicker naturally in response to shortened periods of daylight. If blankets and artificial lights are avoided during the fall and winter months, the hair coat will develop into a warm natural protection from the winter elements. Adopted wild horses and burros are required to have, at a minimum, a two-sided shelter with a roof, good drainage, adequate ventilation, and access for the animal. This two-sided structure needs to block the prevailing winds and protect the major body parts of the animal from getting wet. Tarps are not acceptable and do not provide adequate shelter from the elements. Older, debilitated animals or those few that do not develop a good winter coat may need the extra protection of a blanket under very severe conditions, however this is unusual.

One situation where extra fabricated shelter is very important is when wild horses and particularly wild burros are moved from warm, desert environments into cold winter conditions. Most wild burros come from the deserts of Arizona or southern California. Moving to areas where temperatures drop below freezing and where there may be rain or snow can be particularly stressful. Ideally, you should avoid moving a burro from the desert southwest to colder areas of the northern United States or Midwest during the winter months. If there is any question about the animals adaptation to colder conditions, 3-4 weeks of time with extra shelter in the form of a well-protected shed or barn with lots of warm bedding is recommended to allow the animals to acclimate to their new environment. If a barn is used, be sure to allow adequate ventilation to avoid the buildup of humidity or ammonia in the air. The idea is to allow plenty of fresh air circulation but block the wind, drafts and rain or snow.

When you know you will be riding or driving often in the winter, it may make sense to partially clip your wild horse or burro. With hard work, mustangs and burros will sweat

even in winter and the hair coat can quickly become wet. If this is only happening under the saddle or tack it is not a problem as long as you dry the animal off after your ride and before you turn it out. A rubdown with a towel or clean burlap sack is a great way to dry them off and fluff up their hair so it can again insulate them from the cold and generally say thanks for a good ride. If they are getting very sweaty and staying wet during or after work, they can chill, which can lead to stress, colds, and even pneumonia. To prevent this, consider clipping horses or burros that do a lot of hard work during the winter. Partial hunter pattern clips that focus on removing hair from the underside of the neck and belly as well as the upper legs work well to allow a horse to cool off while maintaining areas of thicker hair across the top for some protection. Regardless of the pattern used, a wild horse or burro clipped for the winter will almost always need a blanket and more shelter in the form of a shed or stall to make up for the natural protection removed with the clippers.

Whether activity levels decrease or stay the same in winter, maintaining a good level of nutrition during the winter months is important for the well-being of your wild horse or burro. Staying warm requires energy, and eating and digesting good quality hay provides the best energy for the job. Most adult horses doing a light amount of work or no work in the winter can be maintained without grain supplementation if high quality hay is provided. Usually 15–20 pounds of hay per day for a typical 1,000-pound horse is sufficient. Supplemental grain should be considered for young, growing horses or horses in moderate or heavy work that cannot maintain adequate body condition on forage alone. A little extra weight on your horse or burro in the winter will help it stay warm, but do not be fooled by thick winter hair. Ideally, you should just be able to *feel* the ribs with the flat of your hand. If you can feel the ribs easily your wild horse or burro is probably too thin and if you have to use your imagination to know the ribs are there, they are probably too fat. Keeping your wild horse or burro too fat over the winter will cause problems when springtime comes with the growth of lush grass and the threat of founder (laminitis). Burros very rarely require supplemental grain and offering a sufficient amount of good grass hay is the best approach. Whether or not it also eats snow you should always provide your wild horse or burro with an ample supply of clean water in the winter. A typical 1,000-pound horse needs about 10 gallons per day. This is especially important to avoid impactions when dry hay is the primary source of forage through the winter.

Finally, just because you may be riding less does not mean winter is a good time to let veterinary and hoof care slide. Consult with your veterinarian to put together the best winter deworming program for your area. It can be a particularly good time to get rid of stomach bots, since the flies that spread them are dormant. In addition to deworming, pay attention to your wild horse or burro's teeth and, if necessary, floating. It can improve feed efficiency. This may even pay for itself by helping you and your wild horse or burro get the most out of every dollar spent on feed. Winter is a good time to pull your horse's shoes if you are not riding a lot. Hooves will still need to be trimmed regularly but it gives time for nail holes to grow out and can make the hooves stronger when spring comes. Going barefoot tends to minimize problems with snow buildup under the hoof and can be an uncomfortable and a dangerous situation in winter. If you must keep shoes on during the winter, ask your farrier about special pads or other tricks that can help decrease the buildup of snow and ice under the hoof.

Winter can be a fun time to enjoy your wild horse or burro. With a warm winter coat, protection from wind and rain, and plenty of good quality hay to eat, most wild horses and burros will happily weather the elements far better than you and I can. They seem to enjoy being outside in the cold fresh air rather than being in a barn. With a little attention to their needs they can also stay healthier that way.



## **A Mustang's Ride and Tie Adventure**

**By Annette Parsons, BLM Employee**

The little buckskin colt was barely an hour old as he stood for the first time on his wobbly legs. His dam nuzzled him with encouragement. Winters are harsh and summers are relentless in the rocky, sage-covered high desert along the border between northeastern California and northwestern Nevada that is home to the High Rock Herd Management Area (HMA).

The next two years saw the little colt grow strong and fit, his golden dappled coat gleaming in the sun as he roamed the desert with his herd, seeking food, shelter, and water. He learned to listen to the lead mare that alerted the herd when danger was near.

Due to an overpopulation of wild horses in this HMA, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had to remove several of the animals from the public rangelands. The little buckskin colt was one of many that were removed and taken to the BLM's Litchfield facility near Susanville, California. He was introduced to several strange things. He began to learn that the tasty hay offered at the facility was much better than the coarse, sparse grasses on the public rangelands. He also learned that fresh, cool water was only a few steps away however he did not exactly trust the strange two-legged creatures that frequented the corrals, but he began to adjust to their presence.

He was adopted by one of these two-legged creatures and taken to a new home. Unfortunately, his new adopter did little to diminish his fears. The young horse was named "Spirit" and lived up to his name as he continued to use his fight and flight defenses as wild horses will. The beautiful golden horse's lucky day arrived when a young ranch hand named Jani took him with her to a working cattle ranch in southwestern Oregon. Jani's patience and gentle handling, coupled with her understanding of the relationship needed between humans and wild horses, allowed her to gently tame this 6 year-old mustang that no one else had been able to handle. As their mutual friendship grew, Spirit learned to carry a saddle and rider and to follow her commands. His now calm temperament and Jani's skills led to a very successful partnership between them. He adjusted well to his new job as a working cow horse and spent many hours each day earning his keep by herding cattle. Spirit had no clue that this was excellent training for his next adventure, "Ride and Tie".

Jani had heard of the sport and knew that Spirit could do it. Ride and Tie is a very demanding test of endurance and speed between teams consisting of two people and one horse. The horse gets brief rest periods as the other partner on foot catches up to the tied horse, mounts up, then trots or canters ahead to catch and pass the other partner. A Ride and Tie course typically covers about 35-40 miles. Spirit's life as a wild horse on the rugged public rangelands taught him the endurance and sure-footedness needed to run the race while the ranch work was perfect training as it mimics the horse's natural cycle of running and resting.

The 2007 World Ride and Tie Championship was held in June 2007, in the coastal redwoods of northern California. Jani's sister, Heather, was an excellent runner but

needed to find another partner that matched her abilities. Heather asked for assistance from the race director to locate a partner. He put her in touch with an experienced Ride and Tie competitor from southern Oregon named Jim Clover, my husband, who was seeking a partner with a horse. Jim had completed 13 championship Ride and Tie races.

By this time, Spirit was a gentle, calm, steady mount that enjoyed the attention of people of all ages. Jani even used him as a riding lesson horse for young children. I fell in love with him the first time I met him, and was delighted to have him at my home during the two weeks prior to the race. I helped keep him fit, as Jim and Heather got together on weekends to practice riding and tying with Spirit.

When we trailered Spirit to the race site for the big championship weekend, he was an instant hit around the ride camp. In a sport dominated by elite, sleek, fiery Arabian endurance horses, Spirit's gorgeous golden dapples, dark mane and tail, and calm, sweet manner endeared him to even the most die-hard Ride and Tie racers. Spirit was a wonderful ambassador for the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro program. However, due to his stocky build, some people felt he might be pulled at the first vet check.

In spite of never having seen an endurance or Ride and Tie camp before with all the trucks, trailers and corrals, people and horses milling about, Spirit took calmly to the setting as he surveyed the competition. He accepted the pre-race vet check-in exam with patience and calm, and did not flinch when a race official drew a big #31 in grease pencil on his broad rump. The veterinarians admired his big, strong, hard bare feet as he trotted out and back during the exam. Most endurance and Ride and Tie horses are shod.

Race day dawned cool and overcast; perfect race weather! The other 45 or so horses milled and danced about in a large grassy hillside waiting for the famous "hat toss" that would start the race. Spirit stood calmly waiting for the cue from Heather. At the toss of the hat, all the horses began to gallop up the grassy slope to join with the dirt road where the runners had already started. Spirit's black mane and Heather's dark hair flew in the wind as they galloped up the hill amidst the crowd.

Throughout the race, Heather and Jim switched off between running and riding approximately every mile or two. Spirit learned quickly to stand calmly as he was tied to a tree while his rider took off on foot. He waited for his other partner who soon appeared, mounting up and heading off again at a trot to catch their other runner.



Heather and Spirit  
Start the Race

Meanwhile back at the vet check station, Heather's parents and I waited the time away anticipating the arrival of Heather and Spirit after their first loop of 17 miles. Our job once they arrived was to offer Spirit water, hay, bran mash, electrolytes and fill the water bottles on the saddle for Jim and Heather. We had to get Spirit cooled out and rested so that his pulse would lower to the requisite maximum of 72 beats per minute. Jim could present him to the vets for examination before continuing on to catch Heather. Besides making sure his pulse was down, the vets would look for signs of stress or injury by observing things like his hydration level, capillary refill rate, respiration rate,



Sprit and Heather Race to the Finish Line

gut sounds, way of going, attitude and soundness. They had Jim trot Spirit out and back and observe his gait for any sign of lameness.

Because the first loop of the race was partly on rocky road surfaces, we opted to put boots on Spirit's front feet to minimize any chances of a stone bruise. Even with his hard strong hooves the excitement and rush of a race can cause a misstep and we did not want to risk Spirit getting injured. Heather and Spirit reached the vet check a full half-hour before we were expecting them! She said that he was doing great and felt we could remove the boots for the second loop. As Heather grabbed a bite of an energy bar and an electrolyte drink and took off on foot, we sponged Spirit's legs and belly, checked his pulse, removed his boots, and made sure he had feed and water. I was amazed at how quickly his pulse recovered from his working rate to well below the 72 criteria as he munched contentedly on hay and apples. When Jim appeared moments later, Spirit was ready to be presented to the vet.

Sprit and Jim wait for the vet check

Spirit passed the first vet check with flying colors and we waved good bye as he and Jim headed off at a trot into the second loop of 12 miles to catch Heather. We sat back once more to wait for another hour and a half until Heather and Spirit once again trotted into the vet check and we repeated our routine. Heather hurried off on the last 4-mile section to the finish. Spirit was beginning to get a little tired but was still a willing and gentle partner as he pulsed down quickly and passed the vet check...um, except for when he tried to kick the vet as he examined his hind feet...bad politics Spirit! That was his only demerit for the entire weekend! After that, he and Jim were off to catch Heather and find the finish line.



We piled all our buckets, blankets and gear into the truck and rushed back to camp in time to cheer them on as they crossed the finish line! They finished in a very admirable time of 4 hours and 42 minutes, in 17<sup>th</sup> place overall and were the second Pro-Am team to finish. They were a mere 4 minutes behind the first Pro-Am team and just missed winning the \$1,000 cash prize! We took Spirit back to camp, removed his tack, sponged him down and cooled him out. We gave him hay and water and when he was once again presented to the vets for the required one-hour post race exam he again passed perfectly. This time there was no kicking...he had learned his lesson.

At the awards ceremony, Heather and Jim accepted their race completion buckles from the Ride and Tie Association president. As a BLM employee, I was proud to present them with the "First Mustang" award donated by the BLM. I also gave a short speech lauding the versatility and strength of the mustang and BLM's Adopt a Wild Horse or Burro Program. After the race I heard a remark or two to the effect that "Spirit has caused

me to rethink this mustang thing”. There was also a 13 year-old mustang mare that had successfully completed the 17 mile short course and was recognized as the “First Mustang” in the short course.

Spirit is back at his ranch job working cattle with Jani. I wonder if his equine dreams ever take him back to his adventure in the great 2007 World Ride and Tie Championship; who knows? Perhaps he will one day race again...and next time he will know what to expect! Or perhaps Heather will one day compete in a Ride and Tie race with her own buckskin mustang filly. We know the mustangs can do it!



Jim, Heather, and Spirit Race to the Finish Line