

MUSTANGS ON THE MOJAVE TRAIL

By Doug Gorman, Norco Mounted Posse Member and California BLM Wild Horse and Burro Volunteer



For the last twenty-one years, the NORCO MOUNTED POSSE has sponsored a trail ride across the Mojave Desert, using the old Mojave Trail. Depending on which trail head the ride starts from, the average miles traveled are approximately one hundred and fifty. The trip begins in the first week of April, so we can avoid the hot weather.

In 2002, I decided to make the ride on my newly trained Mustang "Virgil". Well "Virgil" made the complete ride, but I didn't, due to a pre-existing back injury, that forced me to seek medical attention after four days into the ride. My Mustang "Kiowa" made the trip as the "Drag" horse, and I was forced to sell him to a new convert, who used to make this trip on her Arab.

Since that first trip in 2002, I was hooked! Due to work, I was unable to attend the ride in 2003, but was ready, willing and able to make the trip in 2004. For this trip, I took my Mustang "Homer", my Mounted Posse trained horse. At twenty-one years of age, "Homer" performed well as the "DRAG" horse, and did his breed well.

Having owned Mustangs since 1995, and being a true believer in these animals, I couldn't help but brag about them. After taking our new Mustang "Dot" on the trip in 2005, my best friend decided it was time for him to get a Mustang.

In late 2005, my friend purchased "Jethro" from his owner in Nevada. "Jethro" joined "Dot" on the trip in 2006. Both Mustangs proved to be hardy horses, and along with "Kiowa", the Mustang breed was well represented.

I became a volunteer for the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program in 2005, and after talking with the Wild Horse and Burro Compliance Specialist Jason Williams about the ride, he was allowed to attend the ride on behalf of the Folsom Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).



The BLM has gotten a bad name over the years, due to the amount of paperwork required to put on the ride, and the restrictions that we have to abide by while riding on BLM land. When Jason showed up with "Stinger", his BLM Horse, there were a lot of reservations as to his presence, and I heard a lot of people voice their concerns over why he was there. Later that night, a lot of these reservations disappeared. During the campfire, Jason, Mike and I were subject to a lot of kidding about our horses being Mustangs.

In the early morning hours, we were awakened by "Stinger" and his friends. When we got up to see what was going on, we found four horses to be loose, and two of them were heading east away from camp. None of these were Mustangs!



In just a short amount of time, Jason was dressed, and "Stinger" was saddled and the both of them were on their way after two of the loose horses. His quick action, and his ability to "COWBOY UP", started knocking down those walls and those reservations that most of our return riders had about the BLM.

After the first day of riding approximately 26 miles, a non-believer came up to our trailer and jokingly began to chide us, saying that our

horses would have to be trailered sometime on the trip. Well the mustangs proved him wrong. On the second day of the ride; all four of the "Boys" were willing, able, and ready to ride. The jokester's horse had to be trailered 26 miles that day.

Over the six days of riding, "Stinger", "Jethro", "Dot" and "Kiowa" proved themselves to be very able and capable horses. We got a lot of questions asked about them. People could see that these horses were very able to perform all the tasks that were asked of them.

It was fun watching people's reactions as they would walk by our trailer, and see our crew sitting down in lawn chairs, and the Mustangs lying down near us. This really opened some minds as to the Mustang horse.

As I mentioned earlier, there were a lot of concerns about having a "FED" riding with us. After only a couple of minutes of talking with Jason, people opened up to him, and Jason broke down barriers that have been in place for years. Jason showed up with his positive personality, and his ability to get things done, help other people, and did more to break away any reservations most of the riders had over his presence. He did more to tear down those walls and barriers, and promote the Wild Horse and Burro Program, and the BLM, than any advertisement ever could.

The best thing about this was, the following weekend; the BLM was hosting an adoption in NORCO. After the ride, Jason received a lot of inquiries into the adoption, and how someone could adopt a Wild Horse.

As we left camp on day five, "Stinger" proudly displayed the words 'ADOPT A WILD MUSTANG', painted across his hind quarters, and "Dot" being one of the Drag horses had 'THE END' painted across his. Not bad for Wild Horses!



The four Mustangs on this trip, as well as the presence of Jason Williams promoted the Wild Horse and Burro Program like no advertisement could. I would like to thank Jason, for his positive attitude, and his willingness to help others, and the Folsom Field Office of the BLM for allowing him to take this trip. WELL DONE!!

For Information on the NORCO MOUNTED POSSE MOJAVE RIDE, please check their web site at www.norcomountedposse.com.

* "Copyright 2008. Reprinted with permission of *The Spokesman-Review*. Permission is granted in the interest of public discussion and does not imply endorsement of any product, service or organization otherwise mentioned herein."