



WHSA OFFICIAL NOTICE: WILD HORSE MUSTER WA – NSW

Tuesday, 11 May 2010

The WHSA was founded in 1986 to establish a Studbook to ensure the recognition and survival of the Waler horse as a breed. For over 20 years the society has been witness to the capture, relocation and rehabilitation of foundation horses from remote Stations across Australia which has ensured the genetic diversity and longevity of our wonderful breed.

When rescuing and relocating foundation stock the primary concern is the horses health and well-being, before, during and after capture.

From past experience the society acknowledges above all the need to place these horses in the care of experienced individuals and groups that are fully aware of, and prepared for the nature of horse(s) they receive.

Sadly in the society's 20 years we have seen some rehabilitation efforts that have been rushed and under prepared result in the painful demise of the animals, not via a station cull, but through the well meaning but misguided efforts of an inexperienced owner ill-equipped to care for a wild horse.

As a result of the Society's experience and that of expert groups it has worked with, the WHSA Committee believes that the most effective way to ensure the long-term health and well-being of ex-station horses is to relocate them in smaller groups via trucks to a location/s whereby they can receive prompt care and initial passive handling from experienced individuals. We believe this method minimises the stress and injury to individual animals especially those that are young, weak and/or in foal. This also sets these horses up for success as they begin a useful life in a domestic environment.

The WHSA Committee is aware of Leighton (Sonny) Bullen's proposal to muster and drove up to 400 wild horses from [REDACTED] Station near Wiluna in WA, over 3,000km to Tamworth in NSW. The WHSA Committee does NOT support this proposal, primarily on the grounds that the risk of injury and prolonged suffering and/or death of the horses is too high. Such risk is avoidable with alternative forms of transport, care and rehabilitation available. Unfortunately, to date, the WHSA Committee has not sighted any information regarding the proposed muster and drove that adequately covers the planning and administration of feed, water, medical and/or veterinary care en route, nor the separation of mature stallions and potential fighting individuals such as lead mares amongst rival herds. Due to comment already received from several eastern states wild horse rescue groups, the Committee must also acknowledge the significant challenges which would be faced in finding suitable homes for such a large number of these outback horses in an already slow economic market.

Furthermore, the WHSA has been assured that the proposed minimal cull to be conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia in the region over the next few months poses no immediate threat to the majority of the horse population as it will focus predominantly on the far greater and more environmentally destructive camel population. The tender also allows station stakeholders to specify whether or not they wish horses to be culled and at least one of the three stations involved has already indicated that it is not interested in having its wild horse population removed.

The WHSA does, however, acknowledge that on station culling practices are often employed successfully to manage herd numbers, improve overall stock quality, and to improve sustainability of competing livestock with regard to limited resources.

The WHSA Committee has determined that the old bloodline station horses running on [REDACTED] Station, with no modern line influence, meet the necessary criteria and are eligible for WHSA Foundation registration. As per the WHSA Horse Register Rules and Regulations, these horses are subject to normal registration procedure including the classification by two approved WHSA classifiers and subsequent review by the committee to ensure the quality of stock being introduced into the Horse Register. By working with WA based wild horse rescue group, the Outback Heritage Horse Association of WA Inc (OHHAWA), the WHSA has so far Foal Recorded a number of young horses from this station and has been pleased with the positive results from the rehabilitation methods being practiced.

In conclusion, the WHSA does NOT endorse the mustering and droving of several hundred wild horses, through some of Australia's harshest environments, for over 3,000kms taking several months. Having said this, the WHSA wishes to maintain open communication with all parties involved in the hope that chances for an improved overall outcome for these station horses can and will occur.