

N1615

DATE: January 11, 1995

SUBJECT: Summary of 1994 horse monitoring and activities

TO: Superintendent, through Wildlife Resource Specialist

FROM: Horse Technician

Population Data

A feral horse population monitoring survey was conducted each month during 1994, with the exception of February, May and December. In January, there were 165 feral horses living on the island. The population structure and count in March is used in our feral horse population model. This year's March count was 166. The final survey of the year, completed in November, documented 167 horses. Twenty-two foals were born this year between March 13 and mid-September, the majority (68%) in May and June. Foals born by month were:

March - N9BFS	June - M6IMQS	September - N6BS
	M6MS	
April - N6BKOS	N6GS	
T3DHS	N9BFNS	
	N9BJNS	
May - M17GPS	N9BLS	
M2EINS	T5AGS	
N100S	X13S	
T5AFS		
T5APS	July - N6ELS	
X15S	N6EMS	
X25S		
	August - T6MS	

M6IMQS was born to a two-year-old mare on June 12. According to Dr. Ron Keiper, this is the first documented case on Assateague of a mare successfully breeding at one year of age.

Two deaths were confirmed, with an additional five horses missing and presumed dead. N9BFR was found in the State Park campground on 6-6-94 with an apparently dislocated shoulder. As horses rarely recover from this type of injury, he was euthanized on that day. The two-month-old foal N9BLS was found dead of unknown causes on 8-25-94 at the east end of the Verrazzano bridge. The missing and presumed dead horses were: N6K (Squiggles), N9BFS, T3D0, T5AGR and X9 (Roan Patch).

Fertility Control

In 1994, after six years of testing on Assateague, PZP fertility

control technology became available for use in Assateague's feral horse population management program (Memo N1615, dated April 22, 1994). After a meeting in January to discuss the application of a feral horse population model that had been prepared for ASIS, and completion of an Environmental Assessment, approval was given to dart every mare two years old and older with a single dose of PZP immunocontraceptive in 1994. Four mares were excluded from treatment. M4J was excluded because she is the last of her maternal blood line. M6I, N6H and T6 are long-term test animals that were removed from treatment to confirm reversibility of the effects of PZP.

Darting began on March 3, and by March 19 all 76 mares had been treated with a single dose of PZP. For the 30 mares who had been darted in previous years, a single dose should be 100% effective. Single-dose effectiveness without a booster for the 46 first-time mares is expected to be approximately 70%.

Transfers to CVFD

Ownership of 12 horses was transferred permanently in 1994 to Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Department. Eight of these were either severely habituated or problem horses. They were corralled, removed from the island, quarantined at headquarters until negative Coggins test results were received, and then trailered to CNWR (Memo N1615, dated July 12, 1994). These horses were removed from the island between 5-10-94 and 6-29-94, and transfers to CNWR were made between 5-29-94 and 7-9-94. The horses moved were:

N4BMP	M17JO	N4BMQ	M17GP
N9BMP	X13Q	N4BM	M17GPS

The other four transferred horses were young stallions that persisted in going around or through the state line fence to CNWR's freshwater wetland. These include X10, N6BKQ, T3DHP and X24P, who were turned over to CVFD at their October roundup.

Before these roaming horses were transferred, attempts had been made to return some of them to ASIS and keep them here. T3DHP, X24P and five other horses had been rounded up in July by the CVFD (in both 1993 and 1994), trailered back to ASIS and released at dune crossing one. In spite of repairs and an extension made to the state line fence, two of these horses subsequently returned to CNWR and so were transferred (T3DHP and X24P). The other five (T5AGQ, N6BP, N6BK, N6BKR, T5AFP) stayed on ASIS until late summer, when they were reported again on the CNWR freshwater wetland. The stallion T5AGQ remained solitary, while the four mares had become part of our State Line Band. They returned to ASIS a few days before the CVFD October roundup, and so were not transferred. As of the end of 1994, they were still on their

ASIS range. At that time, our State Line Band included:

N6EIM
N2BM
N2BMR

T5AFP
N6BP

N6BK
N6BKR

N6BK0
N6BK0S

One more young stallion, T5AFQ, inadvertently became the property of CVFD when he was rounded up in their south corral in July and sold at the 1994 auction. Four of the officially transferred horses - N4BMP, N9BMP, M17JO and M17GPS - were also sold at the auction.

CVFD Horses on ASIS

Three CVFD horses lived on ASIS through June 1994 with the State Line Band, returning to CNWR before the July roundup, where they have remained. All three mares have spent varying amounts of time on ASIS since December 1991. One is a large, red and white pinto mustang with a "C2" brand on her neck; the second is a smaller cream and white pinto with a predominantly black mane; the third is a short, round solid-chocolate-colored mare. None gave birth while on ASIS.

Freeze Branding

In February, an attempt was made to mark by freeze-brand some of our solid colored horses that had no obvious distinguishing characteristics. An eight-year-old mare and two yearlings (T3K, T3KR and N9BMR), all solid bays, were chosen for the experimental branding. They were successfully corralled, but they could not be restrained well enough with the available equipment to safely attempt branding. The project was tabled indefinitely.