

From Wild to Tame

Introduction: After volunteering for the BLM Wild Mustang and Burro program, and working a few adoption I realize that a lot of people that adopt these wild animal know very little about wild animals. So this prompt the writing of this paper, in hopes it will help some people with their new horse or burro. It is an outline that shows the way I gentle young wild mustangs, my method is not the only way but it has worked great for me and the young BLM mustangs I have brought home. There are two very important things you need before thinking about adopting a Wild Horse or Burro: **Number One is the time** to work with them. If you only spend one hour a day you will have it made, it doesn't take a lot of time but it does take time. The first week is most important, even if you just sit there and read to them, you need to be with them to connect up with them. It's better if you do it, don't pay someone to do it. I have one mustang that only I can touch, she was hurt bad at her capture so she still remembers not all people can be trusted. **Number two is the patience's** it takes to wait on your animal to become tame; this doesn't happen in one hour, no matter how good you are. The more time you spend with your animal the more they will become yours; body, mind and spirit. Each wild horse I have worked with has been different, but I find with each one I'm learning so much, they are the greatest teachers I have ever found. My goal is to help as many Wild Horses as I can each year, and mostly to help them not to go back to the BLM holding pens. That is why I gentle them and will take them to the next adoption. It's so hard because each one is so special, each one has taught me so much, and each one is and will always be a part of my soul, because they are so beautiful, pure of spirit, and have long memories that they share with me. They totally amaze me, with how fast they come around for me, sometimes I'm in a hurry because I only have a month to work with one, but they will slow me down quick if they need me too, just by one look of fright in their eye, I back up and wait on them. If I miss an adoption, no worry for there is always another around the corner. So, I don't let it bother me any more. Most important thing to remember is to have fun, laugh with your horse or burro, they love it, talk to your horse and they will talk to you! Remember if you ever get in a jam call someone like me, a volunteer or BLM, we can help you, but we can't if you don't ask. This is just an out line to help you in your first month with your new animal. I don't want to see you have trouble and/or your animal sent back at the BLM holding pens. Please call someone first, we might be able to help you over the phone, or we can come out and physically help you... Or someone might be able to take your animal for a small amount of time to work though certain issue you are having. That's what we are here for; there are over 200 volunteers in California. And most of us will come out to help you at the first call.

1. At the adoption I always have the wrangler put a halter with a drag rope on my new animal: I like to use a nylon halter with leather strap across the top called a 'Break away Halter' just in case it would get stuck on something it would break, plus the drag rope should be at least 4' of rope tied on the halter no snap, because the snaps break, it's so good for them to learn to give to the rope (pressure) right off, plus it slows them down if they get loose.

2. First Day

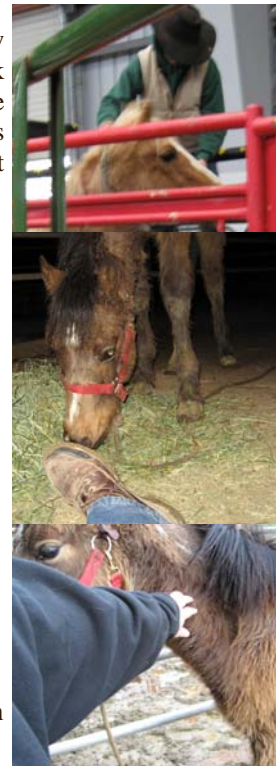
- a) First sight, they see you, they watch you, you watch them
- b) First touch, they touch their nose to your foot, usually: **Don't try to touch them let them touch you first!**
- c) First taste of sweet feed, their new water, and hay
- d) First smell, they start to smell you, you smell their nose, sometimes this can be first touch!
- e) First feel of pressure, you sit still, they come to you, you move, they move; plus the stepping on the rope is the first feel of pressure from the rope and halter, this will help you lead them around quickly.

3. Second Day

- a) you just sit and watch, they watch you, I like to sit near them while they eat, they like the company sometimes I bring my food in too
- b) Second touch, they touch you, you can try to touch them now, very slow movement
- c) Second taste of sweet feed: they eat some don't worry if they don't eat to much they never do.
- d) they come to you to smell you, you smell them with your nose to their nose
- e) they come at you with ears back, you move them away easy with this just a flick of a hand can move them, then sit and let them come back to you

4. Day three to seven

- a) watching each other getting to know each other more, their language is in



movement, so

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

your language is in your movement also, remember every move you make means something to them

b) touching each other slowly, see how far you can go before they move, **DON'T YOU EVER MOVE AT THIS POINT!** this is most important IN ORDER TO BECOME THEIR LEADER YOU CAN NOT MOVE THAT SHOWS WEAKNESS, if they come at you with ears pinned down, make sure you have something in your hands like a hay bag, feed bag, anything that will make them move away and move them away fast. Then let them come back to you! **NEVER! NEVER! HIT THEM! MAKE YOURSELF BIG, THAT SHOULD BE ALL IT TAKES.**

c) sometime during these five days they will start liking sweet feed, but don't worry some take longer, as long as they are eating the hay good that's all they need

d) always let them smell you first, that is a good sign that they are trusting you, never try to force them to smell you

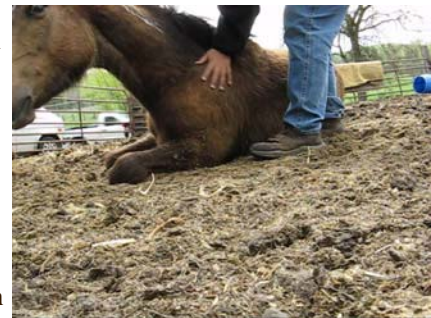
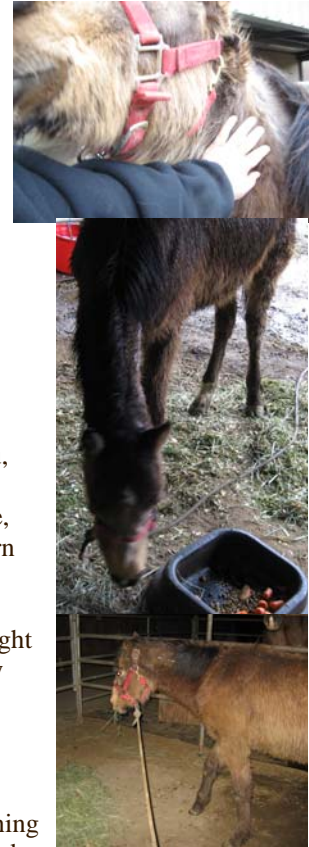
e) in the pen just sit, then walk around clean the pen, act like they are not there, but keep an eye on them, walk at them just till they start to move than stop, turn and do something else, then do the same thing again, you should still have the halter and catch rope on, so they are learning to give to pressure of the rope, during this time if the rope comes in easy reach pick it up don't hold on to it tight just lightly put a little pressure on it in your direction, if they come to you easy great, but if they try to turn and run let go right then, let them go, continue going in the pen and cleaning the pen as above, bring the wheel barrel in slowly the first time just leave it there and walk around but always watch them you don't want to put too much pressure on them yet, let them have lots of room, let them smell the wheel barrel good, let them smell everything you bring into the pen just sat it down and walk away from it, this builds a good trusting foundation that you are not trying to hide anything from them. If they are a type horse that it takes a while for them to go over and smell, WAIT ON THEM, PATIENCE IS A MUST IN THESE FIRST 7 DAYS, the longer it take the better the out come...

5. Day seven to eleven

a) I always watch my horses, from in the pen and out side of it, I watch for anything, a sign of pain or joy, sadness or loneliness, and they watch me, you can learn so much about each other just by sitting quietly around an animal, they always know where you are even if they don't look like they are watching they are

b) by day seven I am touching them all over mostly and starting to pick up their front feet, this is the most trusting part for a wild horse! To let you pick up their feet, be careful mares tend to be more braced but gelding and colts tend to nip more, just go slow rub the leg down, don't pinch the leg that stimulates biting, rub, rub and more rubbing, if you do have a nippy colt or filly play with their mouth inside (your hand should go into the side of the jaw without teeth you know where the bit goes keep it there) and out. Use caution in this... but try not to hit them for it, they are only doing what horses do, teach them without hitting them, watch them with other horses. "Strength lies in a gentle hand" always try to be as gentle as if this was your child, and remember to talk to your animal with easy calm words, they understand more then you can believe, I like to sing to my animals, they love it, really they do.

c) They are really liking that sweet feed now, watching and waiting for it, you have purpose now, they are liking all the good food you bring, I put a piece of apple and carrot in their feed, I mix up their



(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

hay so they have a little of everything, not just the same old hay all the time they are use to variety so I try to give them that.

d) I still like smelling them and letting them smell me or someone else, I also will hang horse blankets in their pen and let them smell those, getting them ready to put those on, I will start desensitizing them with feed bags and horse blanket, anything else I can think of. Construction cones, Big balls, milk jug with rocks in them, just anything I put in their pens so they can smell them and play with them, they love it.

e) Most likely you can lead them around by now, so I will start playing the seven games with them, starting always with the friendly game, petting and petting with the rope, starting slowly to throw the rope softly around them, hopefully you can take the halter and rope off by now, if not that's ok, each horse is different, so do what is right for the horse you are working with right now, the second game I play which I feel is the most important is the porcupine game, this game teaches them to move away from pressure, if they step on your foot this is the most useful game, I really like the 7 games and use them on each horse I work with. You can get a copy of them if you like just ask me for them.

In Conclusion always remember they remember everything you do, every movement you make, in these memories lies fear-comfort, sadness-happiness, hate-love, all wild animals have long memories that they pass on to their babies, it's true that's how they stay alive. So what ever you do with your animal make sure they know comfort, happiness, and most of all LOVE, they will give it all back plus some... remember when you adopt a wild horse or burro you are adopting a friend for life. Take your time with them, keep building your relationship out of love and trust, your training should continue over months not weeks, add something new every week, take them out for walks at first with another horse maybe, then by them selves. If you get suck on something! Please remember to contact someone for help, as I said in the beginning, there is a lot of help out here! And have **FUN!** they are so much fun to watch and be with, you will never regret adopting a wild horse or burro.

Sincerely, Becky DeLaney a happy Wild Horse and Burro Volunteer, you can become one also!

