



## **WILD HORSES**

*of America Foundation*

### **Sulphur Herd Gather - Utah**

26 February 2015 – Day 2

Milepost 25 - Highway 21 – Utah

Today, 61 (unofficial count) additional horses were gathered from Utah's Sulphur Herd. Adding the 14 who were captured yesterday, BLM is now 25 horses short of the 100 animals slated for removal.

We started the day where we left off yesterday and I gave up on trying to capture any pictures since all of the activity was over a mile away. The pilot struggled again this morning and only a few were captured.

Fairly early in the day we watched a few minutes of high drama unfold as a recently born foal continued to lose ground as he (my choice of sex - unconfirmed) ran to catch up with a group of about 5 adults who were being pushed by the copter. The group included his mother, so he was particularly motivated to stay with them. Initially, he was able to stay with his band as they covered a fair distance, but as the trap approached the pace quickened and he lost a lot of ground in a hurry. It was sad to watch him run as hard as he could, only to watch his mother disappear into the distance. The BLM employees who were at the viewing spot with us were on the radio with the staff at the trap and kept them updated as to the foal's location and status, and they kept reminding those of us with binoculars to keep track of him. Fortunately, he continued to run right up to the trap after the others had been caught, and he quickly bonded with the two saddled horses and riders who went out to retrieve him. He was guided to the trap and trailers, and reunited with his mother. We caught up with him later at the sorting pen and he seemed to be in good condition, though a bit tired. (See pictures, below.)

The pilot had difficulty pushing more horses and in the late morning they decided to set up a new trap a few miles to the south. A few hours later the BLM led us to a viewing spot with a phenomenal view of the new trap in Pine Valley. Gus Warr (Utah BLM) said that since BLM personnel were conducting the gather, rather than it being outsourced to a contractor, they could allow us to get close, but we had to promise to stay low and remain unobtrusive as the horses approached.

The pilot's skill improved throughout the day and we were glad to see that he was getting much better at pushing the horses from a distance, and only having to get close when the herd broke up, or as they neared the trap and needed a more formal push.

We repeatedly watched as the pilot pushed groups down from the mountains that were behind us to the west. After the horses had been flushed down one of the numerous small canyons we would watch them appear to the east of our position out in the valley in the distance. Then, the helicopter would push them across our field of vision as they headed north, guide them back to the west and up a slight rise in elevation, and then sweep them back to the south and into the trap.

Most of the horses who were gathered today were caught at the trap in Pine Valley. The pilot was successful at getting groups of horses ranging in number from 1-18 into the trap. However, a good number balked at the last second and escaped back downhill to the east of the trap. Some were caught again by the copter, but some made it back to the safety of the hills.

One group was pushed right into the trap and it looked like a done deal. However, one of the runners jumped out a second too early and spooked them in the wrong direction. 3 jumped over the jute fence and headed toward our viewing position. It was exciting to photograph their escape and I rooted for a successful run to the hills. But then I quickly realized that a successful exodus only meant that the helicopter would haze 3 different horses.

The weather conditions deteriorated throughout today, and BLM wasn't sure if they would be flying again tomorrow. I packed my bags and headed for home.

As a parting thought, I want to thank the Utah BLM personnel for being accommodating. They were very good about answering our questions and making sure that we had the best vantage points possible. I realize that a number of people involved in horse advocacy are quick to condemn the BLM and its methods. While I agree that some of BLM's actions and methods need changing, I can't deny that this group of employees was very professional in how they handled the horses and in how they interacted with the public observers.

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**It was good to see that the lone bachelor from yesterday now had some friends who were also on the “wrong side” of the highway and fence:**



**Sorting pens - Horses gathered in the morning:**









**The foal who made the long run is back with his mother:**





**A long run can make you sleepy:**



**BLM employees and members of the public at the sorting pens:**



**What the horses will see as they get very close to the trap:**





**This big group was pushed up early in the afternoon:**



**And they avoided the trap (not sure how many were captured later):**



**A series of photos showing one of quite a few successful captures:**







**A series showing the 3 who escaped after being spooked by a runner:**















**Sorting pens - Horses gathered in the afternoon:**







**Hesitant to go up the ramp and into the semi's trailer:**



**VERY hesitant to go up the ramp:**



**Highway 21 – South of the sorting pens:**

