

Ride a part of the American heritage a mustang

BY GENIE STEWART-SPEARS

You can't do better than Mother Nature," stated Philip Ottinger, DDS, in a discussion about wild mustangs as endurance horses. "If they don't have good genes, they are coyote bait, and the genes aren't passed on. Natural selection eliminates the weaklings. Only the strongest, soundest and healthiest survive and those genes are passed on."

Carol Wingate, DVM, from southern Illinois was the winner of last year's BLM Wild Horse raffle. She reflected on the occasion: "I buy raffle tickets, not ever thinking about winning anything because I never do. I went to the banquet that night, but didn't stay for all the awards. I was asleep when the phone rang and it was my friend Grace Ramsey saying, 'You won the mustang!' I said, 'You've been partying too long. Goodbye.' The next morning I found that I really had won it.

"I had mixed emotions about it," she continued, "because I had heard some terrible stories about how hard mustangs are to deal with. But, I decided to follow through and picked the filly because I like mares. I later picked her up in Ewing, Illinois, where they loaded her through a chute system into my trailer. Because I didn't have the required facility for a wild horse, I took her directly to a local trainer who did. He walked into the trailer, put a lead rope on her and led her into the barn! The trainer worked with her for a month, teaching her the usual groundwork such as how to tie, lunge, and have her feet picked up and trimmed. The last day, when I came to pick her up, he said, 'Let's put a saddle on her.' So he got a lightweight western saddle, put it on and cinched it up. She just stood there, unconcerned.

"Despite the horror stories I had heard, and to my surprise and delight, she turned out absolutely fantastic! She is 2 years old and



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Raffle tickets will be on sale at the AERC convention for a chance to win a \$125 voucher to purchase a horse at any BLM Wild Horse & Burro auction. Contact the AERC office for more information.

Mustangs awaiting adoption at the BLM facility in southern Illinois. Photo © Genie Stewart-Spears, 618-658-5507.

15 hands tall now. She is very sensible and very curious. I've never had a horse that came into the barn and walked around to see what was different. Nothing upsets her. She was exposed to buffalo at the trainer's facility, and I have geese, cats and grandkids. She is quite remarkable, nothing like what I had expected. She is so different from my Arabians! She is going to be big and calm, and I'm looking forward to riding her. She's a keeper!"

The raffle at the 2007 AERC convention will be different than previous years. Debbie Collins of the BLM Wild Horse and Burro marketing team said, "We will be giving a \$125 voucher, which is the cost of an adoption. This will cut down on the logistics and give the ticket holder more opportunity and control over selecting their mustang. This voucher will be good anywhere in the United States. They can use it for an adoption that comes to their area, participate on an internet adoption or go to one of our facilities. If they adopt through the internet or a satellite adoption where the fee might exceed the voucher amount, the adopter pays the difference."

Like anyone adopting a wild mustang, Collins says their adoption is dependent upon approval of their application. Whether the winner plans to bring the wild mustang directly to their home or to another facility, there are required stabling requirements (see sidebar).



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"We set these requirements for the gentling phase of bringing the animal in, starting the gentling process and a chance to do any veterinary or farrier work that can't wait," explained Collins. "Once the owner can walk up to the animal, catch it and lead it and feels comfortable with the situation, then they are free to turn it out into a pasture.

"We look to the AERC membership as a good adopter base of people," stated Collins, "because they most likely have the facilities and equine knowledge that we are looking for in adopters. Even though



Carol Wingate's 2-year-old mustang, Macha, which she won at the 2006 AERC convention. Photo courtesy Carol Wingate, DVM.

not every one competes to the same level as, say, Naomi Tyler with Mustang Lady or Robin Hood, owned by Dr. Ottinger, the mustang has the potential to fill the need of an serious endurance competitor as well as the casual competitor.

"Our goal," said Collins, "is to reach out to these knowledgeable horsemen and women who we know can take good care of these animals."

For more information on the adoption of mustangs at BLM's wild horse adoptions, visit the BLM website at <http://www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov>.

Stabling requirements for BLM adoptions

You must provide an area that contains a minimum of 400 square feet (20' x 20') for each animal adopted. The area must have access to feed, water and shelter.

For horses 2 years old and older, the corral height must be 6' high (5' for younger horses). The acceptable corral must be sturdy and constructed out of poles, pipes, or planks (minimum 1.5 inch thickness)

without dangerous protrusions. Barbed wire, large-mesh woven, stranded and electric materials are unacceptable for fencing.

Shelters must be a two-sided structure with a roof, well-drained, adequately ventilated, and accessible to the animal(s). The two sides need to block the prevailing winds and need to protect the major part

of the bodies of the horse or burro. Tarps are not acceptable.

You should not release an ungentled animal into a large open area, such as a pasture, since you may not be able to recapture the animal for training or to provide veterinary care. However, once the animal is gentled, you may release it into a pasture or similar area. -GSS