

Horse advocates say BLM sent animals to 'slaughter buyers'

By Frank X. Mullen Jr., Reno Gazette-Journal

Wild horse advocates are asking the federal government to investigate allegations that the Bureau of Land Management sent 172 Nevada mustangs to an auction attended by "slaughter buyers" in July.

The horses were rounded up by the BLM in the Pilot Creek Valley area near Wendover and auctioned off in Fallon on July 10. By law, federally-protected horses can't be sold for slaughter, but the agency says the horses sent to the auction were abandoned domestic horses or their offspring, not federally-protected mustangs.

Such "estrays" or "feral" horses aren't covered by the 1971 law that protects established herds of free-roaming mustangs. Federally-protected wild horses can't be legally sold for food, but estrays can be sold for eventual slaughter in Mexico or Canada, where firms provide horse meat for human and animal consumption.

"I'm disgusted the BLM did what it did with these horses," said Jill Starr, president of Lifesavers Wild Horse Rescue. Starr bought 169 of the horses at the auction. Six have been adopted and the remainder will be offered for adoption or released in a sanctuary, she said.

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