

Mustangs:

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She finds herself divided on the issue of slaughterhouses.

"I can't say 'yea' and I can't say 'nay' because of where my heartstrings are. (For example) I have my Palomino here. He's 20. What if he goes lame and gets hurt? Do I want to send him out to pasture? Can I keep him financially?" she says. "I mean, seriously, I've got another guy out here I took from the county, in Joseph, he's a pasture pet. He came to me crippled after I did my evaluation and he's a domestic-born Paint and unfortunately, the person before me, messed him up. I can't do anything with him so he just eats my pasture and just looks pretty. Do I have money and time for that? No. But am I going to send him to an auction house? No, I can't. That would probably, most likely for him, mean slaughter, and it's not fair to him, so my heartstrings say, no. Now, what other people do in their own time, that is not my concern. Everybody has a choice and if they choose to do that, then it's their choice."

Taming friends

Dawn spends hours each day working with her mustangs learning the idiosyncrasies of each.

"I troubleshoot what each horse will let you do," she says.

The first difficult chore, once a mustang has been brought to where it will be trained, is to get a halter on it. Keeping the bridle on can be a chore, too. One mare, CoCo, was an example.

"She's still learning that touches aren't going to hurt her and what is OK and what isn't OK," Dawn says. "She lost her halter the other day and it took my husband about 10 minutes to get it back on."

She has to find ways to gradually get horses used to being touched.

"When people try to put a bridle on a horse, the horse is like, 'Don't touch me.' They're very sensitive up here," she says, touching CoCo's head.

Dawn is still trying to get her wildest mustang to relax around her. Girlfriend was only two weeks out of the wild.

"It took me about a week to be able to touch her," Dawn says.

She often uses a long stick with a string on it much like is used to direct show hogs. It gets the mustang used to being touched.

"She's the wildest," Dawn says. "She's the most apprehensive about being touched."

She coos and talks to to Girlfriend, allows Girlfriend to get used to Dawn's smell to get Girlfriend used to her and calm down.

"This is just basically teaching her that I'm not going to kill her," she says. "When they realize that I'm not going to kill them, they really start settling down."

Preparing for adoption

Under the BLM's Adoption Incentive Program, the horses remain government property and an adopter signs a one-year contract to ensure they properly care for the horse. Adopters must show they have sufficient feed, water, pasture, a trailer and can pay veterinarian expenses.

Under the program, an adopter pays \$25 for the recently captured mustang and in about two months, receives from the government \$500 to help cover costs of training. Dawn says about two months prior to the conclusion of the contract, the government gives another \$500.

"It's an incentive to get more people to adopt more mustangs that are completely wild," she says. "The government would really like you to take that \$500 and send that horse to a trainer rather than just spend it — put it toward the animal instead of toward your personal gain."

She charges \$125 for a horse that goes to an adopter.

"It may be the most-expensive \$125 you spend, but I've got three and I will never go back to domestic," she says.

What about burros?

The Medleys stick with horses, they said, since true to their reputation, burros can be stubborn.

"I don't really like them. I did one," Dawn says.

"You're on 'donkey time,'" Eddy says. "You do it when they want to do it."

Their lone experience with a burro did have some positive effects.

"Our 6-year-old did really good with the burro," Eddy says.

"She named her 'Pop Tart.' It was cute," Dawn adds.

Home on the range

The Medleys love what they do and where they do it. Their ranch is about 5 miles downriver from Imnaha and the 18 acres have hardly a flat spot among them.

"It's almost all vertical," Eddy says.

He's the one who did the lion's share of building the ranch before he came down with a disability.

They have a garden and a wide variety of fruit trees. They also have a boar, a sow and a litter of piglets, along with chickens and dogs.

Dawn's two older kids from her first marriage are grown and gone, but her daughter recently made Dawn a grandmother. The two younger kids, ages 6 and 9, help on the ranch and attend school in Imnaha.

But in the three years they've been training and taming mustangs, the Medleys seem to have found their calling.

"We have a motto: To get as many wild-to-mild mustangs out of the corrals and find the loving adoptable homes," Dawn says. "Also, to watch something so majestic and 'wild' become your partner and become one with them" she finds fulfilling.

Homeland Project guest house nears completion

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — A house owned by the Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland Project is about ready for a new lease on life.

The McCrae home, on the eastern edge of the 320-plus-acre parcel of land owned by the Homeland Project, is undergoing a renovation, and the plan is that by July it will be available for use by tribal members and other community members, much in the same way other venues on the Homeland Project grounds are.

The family that rented the old home from the NPWH recently moved out, and Executive Director Angela Bombaci said it was time to change how the home was used.

"We are repurposing this house from being a profit center for us as an organization — because we used to make money off of it for rent — to being part of the services that we provide," Bombaci said. "It is a five-bedroom house. We are renovating it to be a place where tribal people will come stay, (and) have that comfortable family setting."

Tribal members and others can use the land for a variety of uses — perhaps the most famous of them being the annual Tamkaliks Celebration at the Powwow Grounds.

But aside from camping or staying in the longhouse on the property Bombaci noted that finding places to stay in town is becoming increasingly challenging, and opening up the home provides familiar, accessible lodging.

"What we found is that as times kind of change here in the county, it's harder and more expensive to find somewhere to stay when you're here," she said. "We



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

The McCrae house, which is owned by the Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland Project, is undergoing a renovation to be available for use by tribal members and other community members starting in July 2021.

realized how critical it was to have family lodging — not camping, not sleeping in the longhouse, and not hotels because basically in the month of July you can't find hotels anywhere in Wallowa County."

Interior work to prepare the home has been underway for months, and Bombaci said hundreds of volunteer hours have helped with the progress — from individuals helping do small things like clean up to professionals donating time and materials.

"Our big push is to have it ready for people to come stay this July," she said. "We have a group of published, Native writers coming out to stay for a retreat in July. The timeline to have it ready in at least its first phase is this summer. But there's bigger scale work that does need to happen."

And there are more opportunities to pitch in coming up.

"We had a plumber come and donate all his time, and almost all of the painting has been done by vol-

unteers. We've come a long way without spending a ton of money yet," Bombaci said. "But now we're on to the more expensive things like painting the exterior, a

new roof and ADA access, and then the fun part, which is furnishing it."

Household items and supplies are being sought via an Amazon wish-list posted to social media. Those interested in donating or volunteering can contact Bombaci at info@wallowanezperce.org, or by calling 541-778-0055.

The Homeland Project will not be charging a fee to stay, but individuals are asked to consider donating when possible.

"We're kind of counting on those who can help us keep it up and running as a community offering, just an extension of the welcome we were founded to provide dispersed Nez Perce descendants," Bombaci said. "The Wallowa community and Wallowa County community want to welcome Native people to this community. This is a very tangible, fundamental, element of saying, 'Yes, come spend time here. There is to be a place to sleep and cook and be.'"

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Letter:

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had no documented claims of harassment by council members. However, in an email June 15, he confirmed that he knows of Betscheider's Feb. 21 letter and its content. He said that other letters of complaint have been received, but he could not discuss their content, who they are from or who they accuse.

"The city is treating these complaints with privacy to those in question until they can be fully investigated and vetted through the council," Eckstein said in his email. "Anything that you release in your article should make note of that as we are not trying to violate any privacy laws with this and we are not releasing a press release regarding these complaints until after the executive session."

Eckstein has said in the past that options the council can consider do not extend

to removing one of its own. Removal would have to be by a recall election by the voters. The council can, however, censure a member by removing them from any committee assignments and even barring them from City Hall.

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