

An American History Of Wild Horses

(http://www.kcet.org/shows/socal_connected/content/culture/an-american-history-of-wild-horses.html)

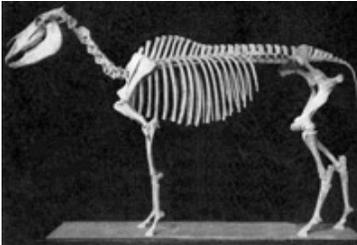
by Brian Frank
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horse-eohippus.jpg

60-45 million years ago

The oldest known horse, alternately referred to as Eohippus or Hyracotherium, is about the size of a dog.



horse-skeleton.jpg

c. 4 million B.C.E.

Evidence suggests genus Equus (which includes modern horses, zebras and burros) originates in North America.



horse-landbridge.jpg

c. 3-2 million B.C.E.

Ancient horses cross over to Eurasia, likely by the Bering land bridge. Several migrations back and forth (and individual species extinctions) likely follow.

Though it is widely held that our wild horses descend from stock brought over by Spanish explorers, some scientists trace their lineage back to ancient horses of North America.



horse-gallop.jpg

c. 1.7 million B.C.E.

Estimated origin of *Equus caballus*, the species we know today.



horse-africaasia.jpg

c. 8000 B.C.E.

The last ancient horses left in North America die out toward the end of the Pleistocene.

Horses now exist exclusively in Asia, Europe and Africa.



horse-native2.jpg

1493-1800

The horse returns to North America with the second voyage of Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus and with subsequent voyages made by the Conquistadors.

Over time Native American populations become skilled horsemen, while ranchers and farmers rely heavily on the horse for the hard task of "taming" the West.

The wild horse population begins to re-emerge as some of these horses get loose.



horse-group.jpg

1800s

By the 19th century, some accounts estimate the wild horse population in North America at as many as two million or more.



horse-ponyexpress.jpg

1860-1861

The Pony Express famously employs riders on horseback to carry mail across the continent in record time—a mere 10 days.



horse-tractor.jpg

Early 20th Century

The tractor begins to replace the horse on American farms. And the automobile replaces the horse and buggy as a means of transportation.

Horses become less valuable. Slaughterhouses begin buying them for meat and other commercial purposes.



horse-velma.jpg

1959

Congress passes the Wild Horse Annie Act prohibiting the use of airplanes to hunt the animals on federal land.

Velma B. Johnston, later nicknamed Wild Horse Annie by her opponents, was instrumental in building support for the legislation after she followed a mustanger and saw how the animals were rounded up and slaughtered.



1971

Congress passes Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act recognizing the animals as "living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West." The Bureau of Land Management assumes responsibility over the animals and gradually

horse-copter.jpg



horse-fork.jpg

begins to reduce their population through a controversial adoption program.

2007

The last horse-slaughtering plant in the U.S. is forced to close under Illinois law. The DeKalb plant, run by Belgian company Cavel International, had been slaughtering 40,000 to 60,000 horses a year mainly for meat in overseas markets.

Still, the Humane Society maintains that many wild horses sold off by the BLM end up in Mexican or Canadian slaughterhouses. The BLM disputes this.



horse-blmMap.jpg

Today

Roughly 45,000 wild horses under BLM protection live in some 200 herd management areas in 10 western states (shown in the map).

Half of the wild horses living on government land are located in Nevada.

Sources:

Journal of Heredity

Natural History Magazine

Rockford Register Star

Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior

NET Nebraska

Humane Society