

Okeechobee wild mustangs saved by local rescue groups

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Saving the wild mustangs of Okeechobee

In 2005 Larry and Barbara Jones owned approximately 1000 acres of farm land used for cattle, 4 wild mustangs, 9 domestic horses and 13 wild burros. The first time they rescued two wild mustangs; a mare and a stallion that were abandoned and near death, the couple knew they wanted to help because they knew it was difficult to find people to help the wild horses.. By April, 2005, the Jones' had taken in 34 horses, and 14 had been placed in long term care facilities with more people constantly calling offering to

help. All went well, and the couple saved hundreds of mustangs until late in 2008 when Larry Jones suddenly died.

From there the story and the future of the mustangs became fuzzy. Rumors of bands of mustangs being dispersed and left to roam freely, circulated and sightings of wild horses in the Kissimmee area were reported. Four months ago, a band of 15 mustangs in the Okeechobee area eluded authorities, but finally the Okeechobee Sheriff's Department was able to lure the wild mustangs in with grain and corral them at the Livestock Auction under the watchful eye of Animal Control Officer, Clare Hudson.

Several weeks ago, a small notice appeared informing readers of a public auction for the 15 captured mustangs. The information was passed onto Brogan Horton, Animal Investigator for [Animal Recovery](#) Mission, and Horton was able to network the financial help for the mustangs by Facebook. Hundreds of animal supporters and horse advocates rose to the occasion and Horton was able to raise \$3000 for her noble animal mission. Only a small portion of the money was needed to procure the horses, however the remaining funds will be used to reimburse the rescues for transportation costs, gelding, and veterinarian expenses.

Yesterday at the Okeechobee Livestock Market, with nearly 30 potential buyers in attendance, Horton and 6 fellow horse rescuers were able to successfully win the bids for 13 of the 15 horses auctioned. The rescue group knew that not everyone attending had the best of intentions to help the wild mustangs. They wanted to make sure each horse would have a safe future and were able to successfully accomplish their goal.

The Retirement Home for Horses took the oldest horse, a 19 year old freeze marked mare. Darlene Stevenson of the South Florida Mustang Club took three mustangs home. CJ Acres Farm Rescue took two mustangs and Wild Horse Rescue has one mustang who will go up for adoption. Two horses went to private parties which the rescuers approved.