



MCSO confirms a 'Salt River Wild Horse' was shot, killed

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The 'Salt River Wild Horses' are majestic animals that have roamed this state for more than 500 years. The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office confirmed Friday someone shot and killed one of those beloved horses.

The MCSO often investigates cases of cruelty against a dog or cat. But officials say they take crimes against livestock, like horses, especially wild ones, just as seriously.

"Dotty" was among the herd of Salt River Wild Horses roaming the Tonto National Forest. That was until a photo of her decomposing carcass surfaced last Thursday.

"It's just one more example why these horses need to be protected and it's just one more example of the enormous public support that these horses have," said Simone Netherlands, president of the Salt River Wild Horse Management Group. At the time Netherlands' group found Dotty they were adamant that she had been shot. But MCSO and national forest officials, at that time, disagreed. Until Friday. "The vet did an examination on the horse, and while they didn't find the projectile, she did determine that the horse had been shot," explained MCSO spokesman Sgt. Joaquin Enriquez.

It was vindication for Netherlands and her organization.

"We're very appreciative that this is now finally in the animal cruelty unit," Netherlands said.

Enriquez says, last week, they just didn't have enough evidence to determine if foul play was a factor.

"We did see signs of trauma but we didn't know exactly what had happened," Enriquez said.

Sheriff's animal crimes detectives now believe Dotty was struck with a small caliber bullet.

"...And that concerns us because you cannot humanely kill a horse, with a small caliber gun," Netherlands said. "The skull is very, very thick."

The gunshot coupled with the likelihood Dotty suffered MCSO says amounts to animal cruelty. And that's something the law enforcement agency has taken a very tough stance on.

"I've been getting a lot emails today as far as pictures and information that's gonna help us maybe get a little closer to find out exactly what happened here," Enriquez added.

Whoever shot Dotty is facing misdemeanor and, possibly, felony animal cruelty charges by the county. That person could also potentially face federal charges as well.

MCSO is asking anyone who knows what happened to "Dotty" to call 602-876-1681 or send an email to Animal_Cruelty@mcs.maricopa.gov.