MCSO posse to patrol river after horses found shot, mutilated (W - KPTV - FOX 12

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By Jared Dillingham

SALT RIVER, AZ (KPHO/KTVK) -

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office is sending a mounted posse to the Salt River Tuesday after three wild horses were found shot.

One of the horses, a 6-month-old, was found dead and mutilated.

"His private parts were cut off," said Simone Netherlands, of the Salt River Wild Horse Management Group. "It was the strangest thing we've ever seen - maybe as some type of sick trophy."

Two other horses appear to be walking fine, despite their gunshot wounds.

A dead Salt River horse was located in the area of the shooting on Saturday, Oct. 22.

Witnesses said a man in black shorts and a dark green shirt shot at the horses Friday. They did not get a description of two others who were with him.

"It's so cruel and senseless because the horse doesn't die right away. He suffered a lot," Netherlands said.

"This is a crime that goes beyond animal cruelty," Sheriff Joe Arpaio said in a statement. The Salt River Wild Horse Management Group said six wild horses have been shot over the last year.

"Killing an innocent horse is as dangerous as it is disturbing," Arpaio said. "What else is this person capable of doing? We need to end this senseless slaughter of wild horses."

Monday, volunteers were out monitoring the eight surviving members of the horse family, or band.

"They're spooked. They're nervous to see people right now," Bill Stallings said. "We're still very worried about two of them," he added, referring to the two horses with gunshot wounds. One has a clear bullet hole above its shoulder.

The wild horse organization is offering a $2,500 reward for information in the case and has opened a GoFundMe page to take donations to increase the reward. The website can be found at https://www.gofundme.com/reward-to-catch-wild-horse-killer.

Phoenix attorney John Schill is offering an additional $1,000 reward for information leading to an arrest.