



Mustang

Equus caballus

Description: A mustang is a free-roaming feral horse of the North American west that first descended from horses brought to the Americas by the Spanish. Mustangs are often referred to as wild horses but the more correct term is feral. They are a mix of various horse breeds. The name mustang comes for the Spanish word mesteno or monstenco meaning wild or stray. These were the horses which changed the lives of the Native Americans living in or near the Great Plains.



Geographic Range/Habitat: Mustangs have adapted to survive in the open prairies of the southwest. Wild horses lead a semi-nomadic lifestyle in the vast semi-arid reaches of the West. They may roam over a few to several hundred, even a thousand or more, square miles depending on the lushness of vegetation and the availability of water and shelter.



Behavior: Wild horses stay together for protection. When a group of wild horses moves across the landscape, normally the stallion will be in the rear. The stallion protects his band or group, composed of foals, young colts, fillies, and mares. The stallion also sires the offspring. He usually stands guard, is alert and positioned slightly away from the group. If any perceived threat approaches, the stallion places himself in front of his band and challenges the intruder. Deer and pronghorn often graze near a band because they know the stallion will alert them to any danger.

Diet: Grasses, grains, hay and alfalfa

Status: Free-roaming horses are protected by law and are managed by the Bureau of Land Management in several western states including Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah and Wyoming. More than half of all mustangs in North America are found in Nevada. In 1971, the United States Congress recognized mustangs as "living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West which continue to contribute to the diversity of life forms within the Nation and enrich the lives of the American people."

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