

2002 Findings Report on the Shackleford Banks Horses

Federal legislation passed in 1998 protects the horses within Cape Lookout National Seashore and requires an annual report on the status of the herd. The horses are cooperatively managed by the National Park Service and the Foundation for Shackleford Horses, Inc., pursuant to this legislation and a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 1999.

In January 2002, there were 122 horses on the island, bringing the average population since 1999 to 124. The herd has arranged itself into approximately 22 harems and 5 bachelor bands.

Last summer marked the first foaling season of immunocontraceptive effect. The birth control vaccine Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP) was administered in the field to 20 mares during the spring before the 2000 breeding season. Gestation in horses is 11 months.

As of census dates, the herd size had increased by 17 foals in 1998, 23 foals in 1999, and 17 foals in 2000. Before PZP was used, between 31% and 47% of the mares foaled with foals surviving to census.

The herd increased by 14 foals, involving 33% of the mares, by the end of the 2001 foaling season. One contracepted mare produced a healthy female. Research at Assateague Island National Seashore shows PZP effectiveness averaging 90%.

Nineteen mares received field-administered boosters to prevent fertilization in 2001. Approximately 18 foals are expected in 2002.

Mortality has averaged 6% over the past five years. The herd has been Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) free since 1999. No disease testing was necessary in 2002.

During roundups in 2000 and 2001, 32 horses were removed for public adoption. Six of these adoptees were selected to augment a wild herd at Cedar Island in Carteret County of eastern North Carolina. The Foundation handles horse adoptions.

A roundup is planned in 2003, with removal of horses for adoption through the Foundation.

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