

Shackleford Banks Horse Herd Update February 3, 2011

The Shackleford Banks horses are perhaps the most studied wild herd in the U.S. – genetics is an example. Recently Drs. Gus Cothran and Rytis Juras of Texas A&M University re-analyzed previously collected blood and hair samples with new technological methods. Drs. Lisette Waits and Caren Goldberg of the University of Idaho analyzed dung from older horses that had incomplete genotypes and younger horses that have not been through a roundup. We have updated our data on the parental relationships of the horses.

We work to trace each horse back through its parents. After two or more generations we ultimately trace back to an individual whose parents are both unknown. This horse is considered the founder of his or her line. Then, tracing forward, we can count the horses living on Shackleford Banks from each line. The number, along with age, gender and breeding status of the horses in each line, gives us information on which to make decisions of contraception and removal.



Above: Beta stallion #704 Dale grazes near his 3 ½ year old daughter #3T Hedvig.

Below: The lineages are displayed graphically on a bulletin board for ease of analysis. Each line has its own page; some are longer than others. We use the Wild Horse Information Management System (WHIMS) database by Ron Osborn of Wildwise Solutions.



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Source: Cape Lookout National Seashore, Wildlife Biologist - Horses