

Corolla and Shackleford Horse of the Americas Inspections--Feb. 23-25, 2007

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Sponsoring Organizations:
Corolla Wild Horse Fund
Foundation for Shackleford Horses

Report prepared by Vickie Ives.

To begin, the Horse of the Americas would like to thank everyone who made this eventful trip possible. We hope all our efforts will be one more steppingstone toward the permanent preservation and nationwide promotion of two more heritage herds of Colonial Spanish Horses, the wild horses of Corolla and Shackleford islands. We especially wish to thank Steve Edwards and Rebecca Stevenson of Mill Swamp Indian Horses for providing us with transportation from island to island, a most courteous roof over our heads and the pleasure of their company during our short study of these two groups of island horses.

Also our thanks go to Karen McCalpin, Executive Director, and Steve Rogers, Herd Manager, plus all the directors and supporters of the Corolla Wild Horse Fund who went above and beyond for us by arranging for 4-wheeled drive vehicles to take us all over Corolla and leading us to herd after herd and even to a bone pile that allowed us to see the physical evidence of the CSH physiology. We will never forget that sack lunch on the picnic tables in front of the Corova Beach fire station, watching wild horses graze on the dunes right in front of us.

We must also thank Carolyn Mason and the directors of the Foundation for Shackleford Horses, most of whom accompanied us on that chilly ferry ride to Shackleford Island and many of whom own their own Shackleford Banker. Their kind permission to allow us not only to see, but also to handle and measure domesticated Shackleford Horses told us much we needed to know about the temperament and structure of these hardy little horses. Our sack lunch on Shackleford's beach was a sheer joy, and I personally will not likely ever forget the oysters straight from the sea and opened by pocketknife. These two support groups are made up of some of the strongest minded and most concerned people it has ever been my pleasure to work with, and I know all of HOA hopes this beginning will lead to many years of working with these non-profits that serve two unique groups of

America's First Horse. Without them, these special little horses might already be a part of the past.

Similarities and Differences Noted in These Two Groups:

Both groups show the traditional balance and conformation of Colonial Spanish Horses. On Corolla, we were able to confirm both the unique fused lumbar spine and Wings of Atlas seen in CS Horses. Note that there is a strong fusion of both 4th and 5th as well as 5th to 6th:



On Shackleford we were able to physically measure several domesticated horses, and all were VERY balanced for CS type from the most typy to the least typy. From the best conformed to the least so, all had matching distances in the points of balanced conformation in the CS Horse. These measurements were taken 1) from point of the skull to the front of the withers, 2) from the top of the withers to the attachment of the hindquarters, 3) from the top of the withers to the point of the shoulder, 4) from the top of the loin to the point of the hip and 5) the depth of the heartgirth.

We could move these horses at will and saw their Spanish type action at walk, trot and



canter. These horses also allowed us to understand the reason that various detractors who have suggested that these horses must carry pony blood because of their supposed “cobby” appearance have not looked closely enough. These horses store fat very efficiently and are extremely hardy keepers that bulk up over the crest and over the hindquarters quickly when fed by domestic standards. This gives them a “QH hindquarter” look that is not seen in horses from the same herd that carry less body weight.



Compare the hips of the mares on Shackleford Island seen above left to the domesticated the Shackleford bay filly above right and Woody, Anita’s domesticated Shackleford stallion below left. An experienced observer of CS Horses can distinguish that both domesticated horses are in fact, spine high, but it is difficult because of the amount of fat covering the top of the hindquarter. It is much easier to see the distinctive CS hip shape on the mares in the shot on Shackleford.

Likewise, the crest of the neck loses its lovely graceful Iberian appearance and becomes bulky and overly thick when these horses are over-fed. Bob

Brislawn is said to have commented that Spanish Mustangs become cobby in appearance when too fat, and the truth of this statement is obvious when comparing the domesticated Shacklefords with the horses on the island.

The pictures below compare an island mare with one of the captured geldings that the Foundation for Shackelford Horses is holding for adoption. Even the long winter hair cannot hide the mare #93's clean neck while the faded black shows a coarser look that is certainly not helped by carrying excess fat. But fat cover aside, these are undoubtedly Spanish horses.



Their motion, balance and physiology distinguished them from British pony types to the trained observer. The groups also resemble each other very strongly with these noted differences.

- a. The Corolla horses are more similar to one another than are the Shackelford horses. According to the report, "Genetic Analysis of the Feral Horse Populations of the Outer Banks" written by Gus Cothran, Ph. D. from the University of Kentucky, "Corolla herd has only 29 alleles, among the lowest number of any horse population." That means there is less genetic diversity among the Corolla group than any other group of horses. Rather than being feral horses with a mixture of domestic breeds, "they are in effect "a breed unto themselves." Donna Campbell Smith in her online article about Banker horses says, "This is probably due to their isolation and inbreeding, but when compared to other breeds the Corolla herd's DNA tests show they closely resemble the old Iberian horses."





The above pictures show the similarity of the Corolla group compared with the Shackleford group. The first picture is a group of Corolla fillies at Wrangler Farms awaiting adoption in Wrangler's white vinyl pens. The second shows the stallion Don Carleon's mare band on Shackleford Island, clearly illustrating the more divergent types there.

We also noted more colors in the Shackleford group although the dun, buckskin and palomino colors that were once there are now missing since the EIA eradication in 1996 when North Carolina health officials put down 74 horses that tested EIA positive. We hope that these colors may resurface one day as they are due to the recessive dilute factor. Sadly, the grey color once present on Corolla seems to be lost forever as grey is a dominant. Only sorrel, chestnut, bay and black were observed on Corolla today with a very few showing the rabicano trait. The left picture is the tail of the most colorful Corolla we saw, a unique stallion called Spec. The right picture is a Corolla filly awaiting adoption at Wrangler Farm. She also has roan withers, likely the frosty backed trait at work.



- b. While both groups are smaller horses, they are on average, more diminutive on Shackleford Island and also have somewhat finer bone. Both groups rarely exceed 14 hands with about 13'2" the average height on Corolla and even less on Shackleford. The yearling filly on the left is



posed with Steve Rogers, Corolla herd manager, who is about 6' 2" and the Shackleford yearling filly on the right is posed with Rebecca Stevenson, who is about 5' 6. Rebecca makes a good measurement of size in these two pictures of adult bay mares below, the left hand picture from Corolla, the right from Shackleford. Note that Rebecca is a few feet in the background in the Corolla picture and in the foreground in the picture of the domesticated Shackleford mare Sophia.



- c. Head shapes are also more variable on Shackleford. A few concave profiles were noted on Corolla, but many more on Shackleford. On both islands the dominant head is the usual Iberian one, although both groups

could use some selection for finer muzzles and cleaner throatlatches. Still, lovely Iberian heads were seen on both islands as well as concave ones.

Corolla: Iberian (convex) head



Corolla: concave head



Shackleford: Iberian (convex) head



Shackleford: concave head



Heads with straight profiles were also seen on both islands as were some horses with a “stop” or slight concave profile with the dip just above the end of the cheekbone and then the typical convex “ram nose” of most CS horses from below the cheekbone to the end of the upper lip. Perhaps this head shape is an intermediate shape between the two head types. Such heads have been noted by this writer in other CS Horses groups, but it is a rather unusual one.



Left: Straight profile on a Shackleford yearling.

Right: “Stop” or slight dish high, then ram nose below on a mature domesticated Shackleford mare, Sophia, owned by Carolyn Mason.



Again, CS Horse head shapes that were typically Iberian predominated, but straight and concave profiles were also seen, more often on Shackleford than Corolla. This is consistent with head shapes seen in other CS Horse strains.

Other Colonial Spanish Horse traits were roughly the same in both island groups. For example, the hooves of these island horses, like other CS Horses, were large for the body size, impressively thick walled, and of several shapes from round to “mule-footed.” This writer was surprised to see that they were not “sand-footed”. This type hoof tends to spread or “pancake” for a broader, flatter walking surface such as we have seen in some desert horses, but it was not present in any of the examples we saw on both islands. Their hooves were more similar in type to Barb type strains than flatter footed Southwesterns. A good heel height was seen on all, but not as high as is seen in most Northern Plains types..



Hoofprints from Corolla:

Left: Single horse shows overstride at walk.

Center & right: Side by side tracks showing both rounder and more “mule-footed” hoof shapes found there.

Shackleford Hooves:



Note the striped or laminated hooves on solid colored legs on these different Shackleford mares at upper right and at bottom left. A few of the Corolla horses showed sclera eyes, but no other coloration usually associated with appaloosa color was seen in either island group.

When looking at horses from both island groups, the base wide build of the sure-footed CS Horse was clearly present in virtually all individuals we saw:



Left: "Speck", a mature Corolla stallion on the island

Right: "Baton Rouge", a domesticated Corolla filly owned by Steve Edwards of Mill Swamp Indian Horses.





Left: A faded black Shackleford gelding waiting for adoption.
Right: “Jersey”, a bay Shackleford gelding waiting for adoption.

Virtually no horses that were excessively wide between the front legs were seen on either island, another testament to their Colonial Spanish Horse status.



On both islands most had no rear chestnuts at all, and those we did observe were so tiny as to be hard to find at all. Even front chestnuts were small or even barely detectable.

The temperaments of these island groups is unusual. They seemed some of the quietest and easiest to handle of feral horses that we have encountered. The domesticated ones were “pocket ponies” that wanted to please and were quite willing to follow one around just to get more attention. The horses on the islands are so used to the company of people that the public has to be constantly warned on Corolla to keep the required 50 feet away. Because the horses are so calm and seem so gentle, people just don’t realize that they are, in fact, wild. On Shackleford they are a bit more wary, but still much quieter in the fairly close company of people, very unlike ferals in the BLM HMA’s that I have visited, likely because of their closer interact with people on a day to day basis.

HOA hopes to add suggestions for breeding stock selection to this inspection report for both support groups to add in the selection of horses for removal from the islands. We also hope to help in the placement of horses offered for adoption by both non-profits. It is the sincere hope of this writer that the Horse of the Americas Registry will be the home registry for both of these groups of wonderful island horses, and that in cooperation with the non-profit groups that support both herds, will help in the preservation of these unique Colonial Spanish Horses for generations to come.

Appendix Material: Shackleford Banks Wild Horses Protection Act'

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the `Shackleford Banks Wild Horses Protection Act'.

SEC. 2. MAINTENANCE OF WILD HORSES IN CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE.

Section 5 of the Act entitled `An Act to provide for the establishment of the Cape Lookout National Seashore in the State of North Carolina, and for other purposes', approved March 10, 1966 (16 U.S.C. 459g-4), is amended by inserting `(a)' after `Sec. 5.', and by adding at the end the following new subsection:

`(b)(1) The Secretary, in accordance with this subsection, shall allow a herd of free roaming horses in the seashore.

`(2) Within 180 days after enactment of this subsection, the Secretary shall enter into an agreement with the Foundation for Shackleford Horses (a nonprofit corporation established under the laws of the State of North Carolina) to provide for management of free roaming horses in the seashore. The agreement shall--

`(A) provide for cost-effective management of the horses; and

`(B) allow the Foundation to adopt any of those horses that the Secretary removes from the seashore.

`(3)(A) The Secretary shall accommodate the historic population level of the free roaming horse herd in the seashore, which shall be considered to be not less than 100 horses and not more than 110 horses.

`(B) The Secretary may not remove, or assist in or permit the removal of, any free roaming horses from Federal lands within the boundaries of the seashore unless--

`(i) the number of free roaming horses in the seashore exceeds 110;

`(ii) there is an emergency or a need to protect public health and safety, as defined in the agreement under paragraph (2); or

`(iii) there is concern for the persistence and viability of the horse population that is cited in the most recent findings of annual monitoring of the horses under paragraph (4).

`(4) The Secretary shall annually monitor, assess, and make available to the public findings regarding the population structure and health of the free roaming horses in the national seashore.

`(5) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as creating liability for the United States for any damages caused by the free roaming horses to property located inside or outside the boundaries of the seashore.'

Appendix Material: Nov. 19, 2005, Raleigh, N.C Picayune Item

Congress has given the National Park Service permission to increase the size of the wild horse herd on Shackleford Banks, a change intended to help maintain the herd's viability while still preventing it from stripping the island's resources. Since 1998, federal law has dictated that the "banker ponies" - descendants of animals brought by Spanish explorers - should number at least 100 and no more than 130. The mandate is meant to maintain the herd's genetic diversity without straining the resources of the grassy barrier island where they live, part of the Cape Lookout National Seashore. The herd's base size will increase to 110 and it will periodically be allowed to expand to 130 or more, under a bill approved by unanimous consent Wednesday by the U.S. Senate, U.S. Rep. Walter Jones said. The House already approved the measure.

