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Nevada's Neglected Wild Horses

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The pictures are shocking, malnourished horses, feeding areas clogged with debris and wild animals neglected and left for dead.

It's a bleak look at the life portrayed on federally owned and operated land. It has some speaking out about the care -- or lack thereof -- for these animals.

Eyewitness News spent several hours on Friday with a group of wild horse advocates. They took us through some tough terrain to show us how these horses are being "managed."



Take a short a drive from Las Vegas and you'll find the place, a beautiful desert area where wild horses once roamed the trails by the dozens. Now some believe they are being left to die out there.

Wild horse advocate Laurie Howard said, "Once they're gone, that's it. There's no way to retrieve that, a piece of history gone forever."



On this day, only one wild horse was found -- a dead one.

Laurie Howard continued, "They die in silence for lack of someone to be in their corner."

Howard is with Wild Horses Forever, a group that focuses on preserving part of our nation's and Nevada's history.



This land is federal land and the federal government is supposed to manage the horses. But Howard believes the feds want to get rid of them.

Howard said, "They save money, they save employees. They don't have to manage them; they don't have to hire a person to deal with this thing."

Howard took *Eyewitness News* on the trail to show us whts she is talking about first-hand.



"They're hard to make out because they're so badly burned," she said.

Our first stop was at two water tanks that lead to a trough where horses can drink. A fire destroyed the tanks last year.

Howard said, "We're here exactly a year later. I don't see any difference."

Recently, dead animals had to be picked out of the tank.



"Dead animals contaminate water sources. And the other thing is that you have mosquitoes, and we're worried about West Nile virus. And then there's this trough choked by plant-life," Howard explained.

The journey continues and what we find is the front leg and another front leg. These are the remains of a wild horse. The stench out there is undeniable, and the fact that the carcass has not been removed may speak volumes about how wild horses are managed.

The horses have acute senses of smell. They could probably smell this from miles away, and it might be enough to keep them from a nearby watering trough.

If the wild horse was a symbol of freedom, then Howard believes this is a scene of disrespect. And it's happening under the federal government's watch.

"As a taxpayer and a citizen, there is no excuse for that," Howard said.

The Bureau of Land Management, the federal agency that manages the horses, says they're required to provide "minimal management" techniques because the horses are wild animals.

BLM doesn't believe the dead horse died from dehydration. They say there was water there about a month ago. They also plan to fix those exposed water tanks, but that they're short on manpower.