

JUL 26 1976

NYTimes

## MORE FACTS ASKED IN HORSES' DEATHS

### U.S. Explanation Questioned by Group in Utah

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 25—

The Humane Society of Utah, questioning a Government explanation for the deaths of 50 wild horses on the Army's Dugway Proving Ground in Utah, has begun its own investigation into the incident.

The horses here found over the July 4 weekend near a spring on the Dugway installation, which is used by the Army for chemical and biological warfare experimentation. A report by the Bureau of Land Management attributed the horses' deaths to "elevated environmental temperatures, forced exertion and increased water consumption, leading to heat exhaustion, associated with water intoxication."

The humane society's director, Lonnie Johnson, said in a telephone interview that the society's investigation had found that activities that reportedly took place around the time the horses died could have been related to the deaths.

Mr. Johnson said that he had been told by military and Government sources that the Dugway facility was placed on a full military alert over the July 4 weekend as the result of a sabotage threat. He said he thought that helicopter reconnaissance could have run the horses to exhaustion.

Mr. Johnson also said he had learned that on at least two occasions a Dugway employee "with all good intentions" had chased the horses in a vehicle from a dried-up watering hole to the spring where they were found. He also said that a Dugway medical doctor and his family had camped out at the spring until July 3 and may have kept the horses from water.

### Disease Theory

The American Horse Protection Association said that pictures showing a bloody froth on the nostrils indicated that the horses had died from a rare African horse disease. Senators Henry M. Jackson, Democrat of Washington, and Herman E. Talmadge, Democrat of Georgia, have asked the Department of Agriculture to look into that theory.

John Reed, a spokesman for the Bureau of Land Management office in Utah, said that no tests were run for the disease because the bureau had no reason to believe it was the cause of death.

A week after the horses were discovered, Dugway officials and the bureau announced at a news conference that the horses had died from "some sort of stress and subsequent shock." They said that "human activity, severe weather or some variable combination of factors may have put the horses under stress" and ruled out the possibility that disease or chemical poisoning had caused the deaths.

Daniel Alfieri, a spokesman for the Bureau of Land Management here said that "some of the blood work indicated that there was dehydration" while "others showed that there was normal hydration." He said that tests were continuing.

Dr. F. James Shoenfeld, Utah state veterinarian, plans to bring experts together tomorrow to study veterinary reports. He said that reports indicated that the horses had died of dehydration and that there was reason to believe that the horses were chased or frightened by someone.

In 1968, more than 6,000 sheep died near the area where the horses were found. An investigation in which the Humane Society of Utah took part found that the sheep had died of nerve gas poisoning. The Army has said that outdoor testing of toxic chemicals has since ceased.