



RVOS to Sponsor Extreme Mustang Makeover

There's just something about a mustang that conjures up images of freedom, the Wild West, and the romance of a cowboy lifestyle. The mustang has become so embedded in the American psyche that it's hard to think of our nation's history without thinking about the wild beauty of a mustang running free. But, what do you do when wild horses outnumber the land available to support them? If you're Patti Colbert, Director of the Mustang Heritage Foundation, you partner with the Bureau of Land Management and come up with Extreme Mustang Makeover. The goal: take 100 days, 100 horses and 100 trainers and compete to see who does the best job in 'gentling' the horses. Then offer the now tame horses up for adoption.

The idea was a success and it gave the public a chance to see how adaptable these wild horses could be with just a little training. Now just a year later, the sequel – Extreme Mustang Makeover II, scheduled to be held this fall (September 18-21) in Fort Worth. The stakes have been raised this time as well; it's twice as big for twice as much. There are still 100 days of training, but this time 200 trainers will be paired with

200 wild horses and the purse is now \$50,000 rather than last year's \$25,000.

Mustangs trace their heritage to the Spanish arrival to the Americas. The animals thrived and rapidly multiplied. They came to symbolize the rugged individualism of the Wild West culminating in the Ford Motor Company naming their flashy sports car after them.

But the mustangs aren't faring so well these days. Despite being on protected lands and in a somewhat protective status, the herds are not without challenges. Available grazing land keeps shrinking, adoption numbers are dwindling, and the BLM has to cull the herds regularly to protect resources and keep the herds healthy. The sale of horse meat was outlawed in the '70s, but the pressure is on to reinstate it. And horses are still being exported to Mexico, where they are slaughtered for meat.

There are currently more than 30,000 mustangs housed in corrals and unsold, that cost anywhere from \$20-50 million a year to keep. There are less than that many horses still running free – and the land is at its

straining point. The 2007 Extreme Mustang Makeover was an attempt to shed light on the problem, and offer a different solution. Would more people be willing to adopt the mustangs if they were already trained? It turns out the answer was "yes". Adoptions typically go for \$125, the final average for the 100 mustangs that got adopted through the Makeover last year was \$3,000. Can't argue with that kind of success. In typical modern fashion, TV was part of the act. A six-episode reality show covered the competition last year.

This year's Extreme Mustang Makeover will again showcase these marvelous animals, with all animals being available for adoption immediately afterwards. RVOS has many members that are land owners and horse lovers. So, we jumped at the chance to sponsor this event, and horse trainer Dave Shaffner, and help preserve Texas' natural heritage. You can follow Dave's progress by visiting rvos.com/mustang. For more information on the competition, to purchase tickets to the event or to learn how you can participate as a trainer in next year's event, go to www.extrememustangmakeover.com.