

September 20, 2015

---

During normal operations of the wild horse gather in the Wagner Draw area of the West Douglas HA on September 20, 2015, an approximately 10 – 12 year old chestnut stud horse with 2 rear socks and white RF pastern, went down in the front compartment of the trailer immediately after loading. The contractor's crew unloaded the trailer as quickly and smoothly as possible, but by the time we made it into the trailer, the horse was dead.

There were 2 groups of horses plus 2 adult singles that had been brought in and were loaded according to size with all but 2 of the adults loaded into the front two compartments and 3 foals and a yearling loaded into the back. The loading went very smoothly, but there was some jockeying for position between the groups of adult horses once they were loaded. The loading wings had been untied and pulled away and as the contractor was walking up to pull the trailer away from the trap he checked each compartment and realized that there was a horse down in the very front. They quickly re-tied the wings and unloaded the young horses into the satellite colt pen. Then they unloaded the older horses back into the trap.

I had looked into the trailer through the side while they were tying the wings back up and could see that the horse that was down did not seem to be able to lift his head, although it looked at that time like he was either breathing or doing agonal breaths. As soon as the horses were unloaded the contractor jumped into the trailer and checked the down horse. The horse did not move so I jumped in and checked the horse's corneal reflex. He did not have one. He also was not breathing and his pupils were fixed. The contractor pulled the trailer to a more remote spot and when they were turning the horse to drag him from the trailer I observed that his neck was broken. I made this conclusion based on the way the head moved in relation to the horse's body as they were turning him. There were only two guys pulling on the rear of the horse and the head was not caught on anything, so the unnatural movement of the head and neck was obvious. After consulting with the gather COR, it was determined a necropsy was unnecessary.



Richanne E. Lomkin, D.V.M.  
Field Veterinary Medical Officer  
USDA APHIS Veterinary Services