



George Lane IR Staff Photograph

Dr. Tia Nelson, left, of the Companion Animal Hospital and Tresa Smith of Boulder spend some quality time with two of the mares, brought from Brazil. Above: This mare and her foal fill up on some hay. These horses come from a tropical climate and need these coverings to keep them warm.

Brazilian horses make Helena home

By LAURA TODE
IR Staff Writer

Helena is the home of six new arrivals from Brazil. They're Marchador horses, a breed that originated in South America and has been selectively bred for some 200 years for a smooth even gait. Three mares and one foal made the trip from Rio de Janeiro by plane to Los Angeles where another foal was born before making the long drive by trailer to Montana.

"They're used to a place where bananas are grown, so this has been quite a shock," veterinarian Tia Nelson said.

Behind her, the horses stand bundled up in blankets in the corral at the Companion Animal Hospital where she works. Nelson is part owner of the horses along with Tresa Smith of Boulder. The two women believe their horses

are likely the first Marchadors in Montana.

"They were supposed to be here last September, but there was just one snafu after another with the language barrier," Nelson said.

'They're used to a place where bananas are grown, so this has been quite a shock.'

TIA NESLON,
VETERINARIAN

The rare horses were delivered to Helena last month just in time for the last mare to deliver the first Marchador born in Montana.

The foal was born on the Chinese New Year — the year of the horse.

Nelson and Smith hope their good luck continues with a little help from science. The two women are developing an accelerated breeding program using embryo transfers. When

the three Marchador mares go into season again later this spring, Nelson will harvest embryos, fertilize them with sperm shipped from a stallion in Brazil and implant the fertilized egg in another non-registered Montana mare. If successful, the foal will be a full-bred Marchador.

Given that the three Marchador mares Nelson and Smith own are capable of producing an egg once every 21 to 27 days, the women hope that in a relatively short amount of time, they can significantly increase the size of their small herd.

Strict Marchador breeding guidelines prohibit the use of frozen semen, but Smith and Nelson said they are hopeful that their breeding program will be granted an exception to the rule until it gets a start.

Nelson said not every fertil-

Wild horses auctioned at fairgrounds Saturday

By MARTIN J. KIDSTON
IR Staff Writer

Those considering the purchase of a wild horse or burro for adoption, or those who are simply curious, may begin viewing the animals today at the Lewis and Clark Fairgrounds prior to Saturday's auction.

TO ATTEND
Viewing starts today at 7 a.m. at fairgrounds

Nancy Bjelland, the wild horse and burro program administrator for the Bureau of Land Management, said the animals will be placed up for adoption as part of the BLM's effort to reduce the number of free-roaming equines on the nation's public land.

"Over the next few years, we'll be doing some pretty heavy gathers," Bjelland said. "This year, we'll be tak-

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More AUCTION, page 3C

State Rep. Gallik files for re-election

State Rep. Dave Gallik (D)



ance the interests consequences, including greatly applicability of minimum wage

Horses: Breed has smooth, even gait

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ized egg that is implanted will be carried to full term, but new research on horse embryo transfers is promising.

"Sometimes the more technology you add to these things the less likely they are to turn out," Nelson added.

Marchador horses have been selectively bred in Brazil for almost 200 years according to strict registration and breeding specifications. The breed originated in South America's sprawling ranches where each landowner selectively bred his finest riding horses. Now, those ranches still breed the same lines of Marchadors. Within the Marchador breed, each ranch line is noted in the pedigree.

"The ranchers seem to be pretty conscious about outcrossing very frequently," Nelson said.

The new Montana Marchadors are from the Tabatinga line known for its toughness and strength. Smith said the Tabatinga line would adapt well to the climate and altitude of Montana as well as ranch work like cutting, roping and endurance riding. Mar-

chadors also have a great disposition and are surprisingly mellow, Smith said.

"We don't want show horses; we want useful critters," Nelson added.

Among the breed's general traits, the smooth, even gait of the Marchador is most characteristic.

"They're contagious — you get on them and you can't stop, you've really got to ride them," Smith said.

Often, other breeds crossed with a Marchador will lose the breed's smooth gait. And a horse born in the Marchador line isn't officially registered until it is inspected by a certified veterinarian after the horse's third birthday. Nelson hopes to make another trip to South America to become Montana's first certified veterinarian — mainly because flying one in from Brazil wouldn't be possible.

The strict breeding guidelines are somewhat restrictive but are what Nelson and Smith said keep the horse's bloodlines pure. The two women do not plan to cross breed any of their Marchadors with Montana's breeds.

"We are going to be pretty specific about keeping the lines pure," Smith added.

Auction: Live auction will begin Saturday

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ing 13,000 head of wild horses off the range."

Viewing will begin today at the Multi-Purpose Building at the Lewis and Clark Fairgrounds at noon and last until 7 p.m. Bidding applications will be available for those looking to adopt.

Tomorrow, viewing will

roaming the nation's open range, estimated at 49,000, is more than it can support. The animals have no remaining natural predators and reproduce at a rate of approximately 18 percent a year.

While not native to North America, wild horses and burros bear genetic links to those brought to the region by 15th-century

Seventeen counties aid because of unpaid

BILLINGS (AP) — Seventeen counties could lose state money because they have not repaid more than \$300,000 owed to the state Department of Public Health and Human Services for administrative costs related to welfare programs.

The agency will notify the Revenue Department of the delinquent accounts later this month, a move that will allow any state checks written to the counties to be reduced by the unpaid amounts.

The money the state is owed represents the overhead expenses incurred by the human services department in providing support for counties running their own welfare programs.

Hank Hudson, administrator of the department's Human and Community Services Division, said the costs include a variety of items

such as salaries and utility and audit expenses.

"We know that the counties have wished that the executive branch would drop these old debts. But we don't believe that we have the authority to dismiss them," Hudson said. "It has been an audit issue."

"It's a tough situation," he added. "As it stands it doesn't help the working relationship between the state and the counties."

Most of the 43 counties that once ran their own welfare systems have paid the administrative costs. Under a law passed by the Legislature last year, the state has assumed management of all county welfare programs.

The state sent out letters Jan. 7 to 22 delinquent counties, warning them that state payments to them will be reduced if they do not pay up. Since then, five have

School board denies media request for info on investigation

BUTTE (AP) — The school board here has declined a newspaper's request to provide information about an investigation into allegations of wrongdoing within the school district.

The board voted unanimously Wednesday, on the advice of its attorneys, not to provide information to The Montana Standard.

The state Criminal Investigation Bureau is looking into allegations the Butte police received about "fraudulent circumstances" within the district. But investigators have so far refused to release further details.

The newspaper has argued that at least some information, including the

open government and fairness that the board conduct its business in public,"

Gerry O'Brien, editor of the Standard, told trustees Wednesday.

"Delay in releasing the name has harmed the district with a host of rumors floating around town," he added. "This is the board's chance to set the record straight and stop the damage to the district's reputation both locally and on a statewide basis. It may harm the district in future mill levy elections as well."

Trustees did not state a reason for turning down the newspaper's request. Elizabeth Kaleva, an attorney with the Montana School Boards Association