

DICKINSON, N.D.

Man injured when wild horse from Roosevelt park jumps fence at sale

Other than that, roundup, auction called a success

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• A wild stallion named Bashful took a flying leap and, other than one hind leg, nearly cleared the sales ring into the arena crowd Friday in Dickinson, N.D. at an auction of wild horses rounded up this past week at Theodore Roosevelt National Park near Medora, N.D.

DICKINSON, N.D. – Buyers and visitors at an auction of nearly 80 wild horses from Theodore Roosevelt National Park screamed and scrambled for safety when a 2-year-old stallion tried to jump a fence, injuring a man who was knocked to the ground.

The 2-year-old horse named Bashful struggled to get over the fence at the Friday afternoon action but his rear right leg got caught in thick wires and he began biting and thrashing to break free.

Authorities said William Friedt, Dickinson, who was knocked to the floor by the horse's hooves, was taken to a hospital to be treated for lacerations.

Cowboys jumped into the arena to help and the horse was freed and safely removed from the sales barn.

Larry Schnell, the Stockmen's Livestock manager, moved the sale outside afterward and sold the remaining older horses from their pens, inviting only buyers to go into the penned area.

"We've never had a horse in that situation, ever. They've jumped up a little bit, but never have they gotten that far. He took a flying leap," Schnell said.

Frank Kuntz, who has been buying park horses for years, said the wild horses should not have been subjected to such a stressful environment as the crowded ring.

"Anybody that's got a little common sense, you don't start bringing these wild horses in," Kuntz said. "Bring them in separate. Plus, who knows how these guys are handling them out back? They should have the fence higher. It's total stupidity and total inexperience."

Patty Griffith, a horse trainer from Toppenish, Wash., who bought 11 horses, also said the sale could have been handled better.

"Those horses wouldn't even be rattled if they didn't come along with those fly swatter things and scare them," Griffith said. "They are in a hurry. They're doing their job, but these aren't cows."

The sale drew nearly 45 buyers who bought horses at prices ranging from \$35 to more than \$1,400. One horse, a 3-month-old strawberry roan named Badlands Bill, sold for \$1,425. Schnell said the sale was far more successful than expected, but he said it would be his last wild horse sale. He said he had been reluctant to do it because he was busy with cattle sales and because of the potential problems with wild horses.

Michael Sparling, Bismarck, said he bought Bashful for \$35 with plans to rehabilitate and train the horse.

Father and son Dale and Cody Weflen, Tioga, N.D., bought a yearling stud but found the horse dead in the trailer after it had been loaded. They suspect the animal died from the shock of the enclosure or from an earlier head injury after crashing into a metal pen.

“It can happen with livestock,” Dale Weflen said.

Park officials are testing a contraceptive vaccine on the horse herd, hoping it will help control the population so such roundups and sales won't be needed.

Park Superintendent Valerie Naylor said the latest roundup went well overall.

“It's unfortunate this had to happen at the sale,” she said.