# = Kiger Mustang =

The Kiger Mustang is a strain of Mustang horse located in the southeastern part of the U.S. state of Oregon . Originally feral horses with specific conformation traits discovered in 1977 , the name also applies to their bred @-@ in @-@ captivity progeny . The Bureau of Land Management ( BLM ) administers two herd management areas for Kiger Mustangs in the Burns District ? Kiger and Riddle Mountain , in the Steens Mountain area . DNA testing has shown that Kiger Mustangs are descended largely from Spanish horses brought to North America in the 17th century , a bloodline thought to have largely disappeared from mustang herds before the Kiger horses were found .

Kiger Mustangs are most often dun in color , although they are found in other solid colors . Compact and well @-@ muscled in appearance , their coloration and phenotype make them some of the most desired by private buyers when horses are removed from the feral herds . The BLM rounds up the horses from the two herd management areas every three to four years , and auctions excess horses to the public , returning horses to public lands that meet the desired coloration and phenotype and sometimes exchanging horses between the two herds to maintain genetic diversity . Horses in private ownership may be registered in several breed associations , the largest and oldest being the Kiger Mesteño Association , established in 1988 .

## = = Characteristics = =

Kiger Mustangs are most commonly dun in color , although the breed registry also allows bay , black and roan horses to be registered . There are numerous shades of dun , all variations on a tan base , and many shades have their own names . The Kiger Mesteño Association separates dun shades into four categories : dun , red dun , grulla , and claybank . " Dun " as used by the Kiger registry covers dun horses with black points , and adds the terms zebra dun , dusty dun , smutty dun or coyote dun , depending on the exact shade of body color . Red dun , or the variation " apricot dun " , covers horses with points that are red , brown or flaxen . Grulla covers horses with blueish , mousy or slate @-@ colored bodies and black points , and these horses may also be called lobo duns , olive grullas , silver grullas or smutty grullas . Claybank , another variation of red dun , describes Kiger horses who have golden body coats with red or orange tints and darker red points . Dun horses may have primitive markings , which include any of the following : a dorsal stripe , lightened outer guard hairs on the manes and / or tails , zebra @-@ like stripes on the upper legs , transverse striping over the upper shoulders , dark color around the muzzle , and ears with dark outlines and lighter interiors .

Kiger Mustangs generally stand 13 @.@ 2 to 15 @.@ 2 hands ( 54 to 62 inches , 137 to 157 cm ) high . They are compact , well @-@ muscled horses with deep chests and short backs . In general , they are agile and intelligent , with the stamina and sure @-@ footedness seen in many feral horse breeds . They are generally bold but gentle and calm . They are used for pleasure riding as well as endurance riding , assorted performance competition under saddle , driving , and many other situations where an athletic horse is desired .

## = = History = =

Horses have been present in the American West since the 1500s , when they arrived with Spanish explorers . Many escaped , were released by the Spanish or stolen by Native Americans . Their descendents crossed with horses who escaped from or were released by other European settlers , including draft breeds brought by farmers and wagoneers and lighter riding horses brought by the United States Cavalry . Horses of French descent also moved across the border from Canada to contribute to the herds . The mixture of these breeds created the Mustang present in the western portion of the US today . By the early 1970s , it was assumed that due to crossbreeding , the original Spanish stock had been eliminated from feral herds . In 1971 , the Wild and Free @-@ Roaming Horse and Burro Act was passed , giving the Bureau of Land Management ( BLM ) the authority to manage the feral horse populations in the American West .

Discovery of the Kiger Mustang was the result of a BLM Mustang roundup in the Beatys Butte area in Harney County in 1977 . During the roundup , it was noticed that among the horses collected from the area , there was a group with similar color and markings . DNA testing by the University of Kentucky showed close relation to the Spanish horses brought to the Americas in the 17th century . These distinct horses were separated from the other horses and the BLM placed two groups in separate areas of Steens Mountain to preserve the breed . Seven horses were placed in the Riddle Mountain Herd Management Area ( HMA ) and twenty in the Kiger HMA .

In 2001 , the Kiger Mustang was proposed as the state horse of Oregon . State Senator Steve Harper proposed Senate Joint Resolution 10 after being encouraged to do so by the Kiger Mesteño Association . The resolution , however , failed to pass . Kiger Mustangs have been used as models for model horses and animated films . The original herd stallion Mesteño was used as the model for a series of Breyer Horses , showing the horse at several ages from foal to old age . It was the first time the company had made a series of models showing the same horse . The artist 's model for the title horse of the animated film Spirit : Stallion of the Cimarron was a Kiger Mustang named Donner , also known as " Spirit " , who lives at the Return to Freedom American Wild Horse Sanctuary .

= = BLM management and private ownership = =

The Kiger HMA , 45 miles ( 72 km ) southeast of Burns , Oregon and 2 miles ( 3 @.@ 2 km ) east of Diamond , Oregon , covers 36 @,@ 618 acres ( 148 @.@ 19 km2 ) and hosts a population that ranges between 51 and 83 horses . The Riddle Mountain HMA , 50 miles ( 80 km ) southeast of Burns , covers 28 @,@ 000 acres ( 110 km2 ) and contains between 33 and 56 horses . Horses are sometimes exchanged between the herds to maintain the highest possible level of genetic diversity . After roundups , horses with the desired physical characteristics ( including phenotype and coloration ) are returned to the herds to maintain a high quality of breeding stock . The herds are rounded up every three to four years , and excess horses are auctioned to the public . At two of the more recent auctions , in 2007 and 2011 , over 100 horses were auctioned at each event . The 2007 event resulted in 106 horses being adopted to homes in 14 states for a total of $ 100 @,@ 206 . The two horses with the highest bids went for $ 7 @,@ 800 and $ 7 @,@ 400 . This is much higher than the adoption fees paid for other mustangs ; horses removed from other herds in Oregon can be adopted for a walk @-@ up fee of $ 125 .

Genetic testing has shown that Kiger Mustang is a descendant of the Spanish horse . Many of today 's Kiger Mustangs can be traced back to a single stallion named Mesteño , captured with the original herd in 1977 and released back to the Kiger HMA . Several organizations exist which inspect and register Kiger Mustangs ; each has their own standards for entry into the stud book . In 1988 , the Kiger Mustang Association ( now the Kiger Mesteño Association ) was formed as the original registry for the herd . By 2013 , the organization had registered around 800 horses , and annually inspects between 75 and 100 new horses . Two other associations are the Steens Mountain Kiger Registry , established in 1993 , and the Kiger Horse Association and Registry . The Kiger Mustangs of the Riddle Mountain and Kiger HMAs are the best known herds of Mustangs in Oregon , despite making up only a small portion of the population . As of 2013 , the state had a total estimated BLM @-@ managed feral horse population of almost 2 @,@ 600 , roaming over 17 HMAs and a Wild Horse Territory co @-@ managed with the US Forest Service . A census taken in April 2010 found 60 Kiger Mustangs in the Riddle Mountain HMA and 81 in the Kiger HMA ; estimates made in February 2013 list 40 horses in Riddle Mountain and 61 in Kiger .