

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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## SECRETARY GIVES CHINCOTEAGUE PONY TO CHILDREN'S FARM

The Oxon Hill Children's Farm in Maryland, operated by the National Park Service as a genuine "working" farm, has added one of the famed Chincoteague ponies to its collection according to the Department of the Interior.

Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel has made the Farm a gift of the young pony which had been given to him by the Chincoteague volunteer fire department after the Annual Pony Penning on July 30.

Each year, Island residents celebrate the pony roundup with a carnival and other festive activities, climaxed by a drive in which the semi-wild ponies swim the narrow channel between Assateague Island and Chincoteague. Thousands of visitors have a chance to inspect the ponies, then the year's crop is auctioned off to horse fanciers.

Each year the gift of a pony is made to someone who has a special interest in Chincoteague--and Secretary Hickel, as boss of Interior, is responsible for the administration of Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, where the ponies live, and of Assateague National Seashore.

Legend has it that the ponies are descendants of Spanish animals shipwrecked in sailing vessels on the shoals of Chincoteague several centuries ago. In modern times they have been romanticized by a novel and a movie, both titled "Misty," and are one of the attractions that annually bring several hundred thousand people to the wildlife refuge, the seashore, and the village of Chincoteague.

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