

Isadora's Mission



Photos courtesy Return to Freedom

Saving America's Wild Horses Hi Blaze Kids!



My name is Isadora Cruce and I'm a rare Colonial Spanish Mission horse. I'm so proud to be an ambassador for Return to Freedom, an American Wild Horse Sanctuary in California. It's a demanding job... traveling, posing for photos, meeting and greeting guests. I teach people about Spanish Mustangs and our sanctuary's work to protect America's wild horses! But meeting kids at Return to Freedom is the best!

Kids have so many awesome questions for me about my life as a wild horse at Return to Freedom. My friend **Jessica Schley** and I thought we'd share some with you.

Q: How many horses live at the sanctuary?

A: Over 260 in California and 250 more are in Nevada waiting for us to launch Return to Freedom National Wild Horse Preserve this spring. With so many horses, it's slim-pickings for grass to eat sometimes so we get fed hay, which gets expensive!

Q: How many bales of hay do the horses eat each day?

A: Over 30 bales here and 51 bales a day in Nevada! That's a lot of hay!

Q: Where do wild horses come from?

A: We come from big ranges on America's public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). In 1971, a law was passed to protect wild horses on more than 40 million acres in 16 western states. Today more than 20 million of those acres have been taken away and we're only found in 10 states... California, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming and Montana.

Q: Are wild horses scared when they first get to the sanctuary?

A: The Return to Freedom team always tries to bring the horses here with their family bands, with the stallion, lead mare, other mares, foals, and even small bachelor bands of young colts and stallions that stay together. Wild horses do best in family social bands, and we suffer when we're separated.

...very scary to be chased by helicopters for miles, separated from your family and taken from your home forever. But Neda worked out an agreement with the BLM to keep family bands of horses together and relocate them safely to the sanctuary.

Meet Isadora

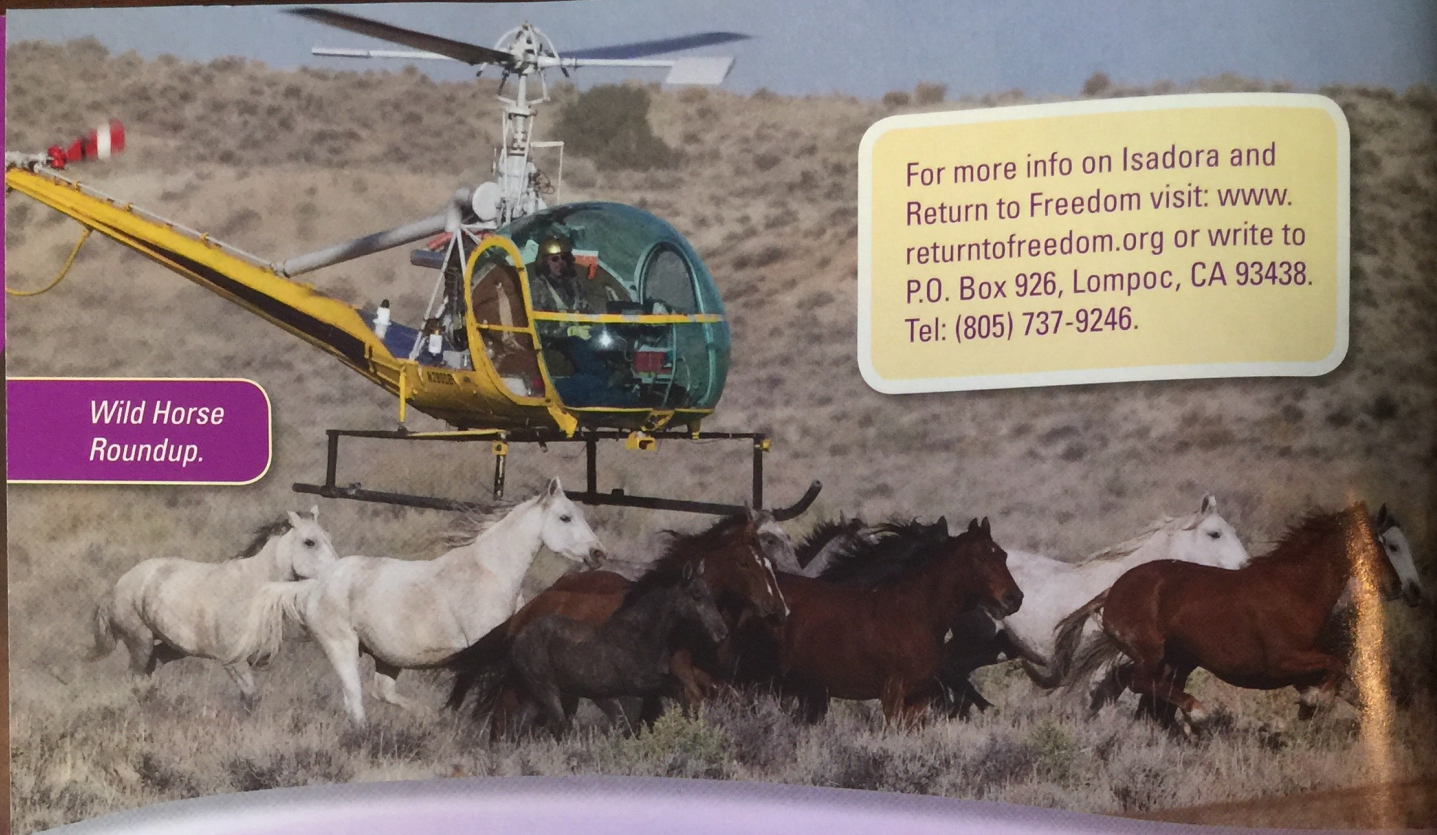
Isadora Cruce lives at Return to Freedom, a wild horse sanctuary started by **Neda DeMayo**. But her story really began during the 15th and 16th centuries, when early Spanish clergy and conquistadores brought their fine horses to the Americas.

Isadora Cruce's heritage is preserved from her herd at the Mission Dolores, founded by Jesuit Father Eusebio Kino in Sonora, Mexico in 1687. From 1885 until 1990, Isadora Cruce's ancestors were isolated on an Arizona ranch owned by the Wilbur-Cruce family.

Today, Isadora's family members are the only known pure descendants of Colonial Spanish Mission horses in the American southwest.

Isadora Cruce is special in several ways. A rare "Medicine Hat" brown-and-white overo spotted mare, she was born at Return to Freedom Sanctuary in 2002.





For more info on Isadora and Return to Freedom visit: www.returntofreedom.org or write to P.O. Box 926, Lompoc, CA 93438. Tel: (805) 737-9246.

Wild Horse Roundup.



Neda Dehghanlou (on right) and Amber A.J. are pictured with Isadora.

Q: What are the humans like who care for you?

A: Very kind! Monica, our barn manager, and her team are sweet and feed us good grass hay every day. Volunteers come to groom and help feed and clean.

Q: How many mustangs are left in the wild?

A: Not very many... 32,000 or so. Our numbers get smaller every year because of roundups. But there are a lot of people working really hard to stop the roundups and keep wild horses free. My job as Ambassador is to help save them. Wild horses deserve to live free in America on the land that was promised to them by an Act of Congress in 1971.

Q: What can young people do to help?

A: Kids do A LOT to help! Kids helped pass the original legislation to preserve and protect wild horses. You can help by visiting the YOUTH section on our website: www.returntofreedom.org. Download a *Youth Take Action* packet. Give a presentation about wild horses to your class. Write a school report about wild horses. Or raise money to *Sponsor A Horse* by holding a bake sale or a garage sale! You can sponsor a horse at Return to Freedom for a year or a month, and get a certificate and photo of the horse you help feed. You can even sponsor me!

Q: Is it true that Spirit, the horse used in the movie, lives at Return to Freedom?

A: Yes it is! He's an Ambassador just like me. Spirit is a very handsome Dorsal Dun Kiger Mustang Stallion.

Q: Are there baby horses born at Return to Freedom?

A: We don't breed horses here but we sometimes have a few foals in the spring. They live with their families who protect them.

Q: What do ambassador horses do?

A: Some Ambassador horses are not domesticated at all. They stay at the sanctuary and represent our history. When visitors come on tours they can learn a lot about American history and horses by meeting these Ambassadors at the sanctuary. Others, like me, travel to events and schools to raise awareness about wild horses in America. In Kentucky, at Breyerfest, I met my fans and signed autographs



with Neda, my rider! I love posing for photos and showing off my beautiful coat and one blue eye. It's not easy being famous you know, but I know I'm helping my wild friends.

Q: Can Blaze Kids come visit Return to Freedom?

A: Yes! We love visitors! We are open from May to September every year. You can come for a tour of the wild horse herds, and learn about how families of horses live in the wild.

We have eight herd groups here. The Choctaw Herd, for example, is a group of rare and powerful ponies that carried the Choctaw and other tribes on the Trail of Tears. Schools visit the sanctuary to learn about their important role in American history as part of their class studies. There are so many great stories about horses here.

I would love to meet you and stand together for a photo. You can help me save wild horses!



Isadora and her sister Inez greeting visitors.