

Old fishing lines threaten Outer Banks wild foals, who eat them like grass, experts say

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The wild horses roaming North Carolina's Outer Banks are being endangered by old fishing lines and hooks left on its popular beaches, according to the Corolla Wild Horse Fund.

Foals have been found chewing on [fishing line](#) as if it were sea grass, the fund reported in a Facebook post.

"We've had a couple close calls in the past weeks with [fish](#) hooks. Luckily ... all the horses that had hooks tangled in their manes and in the hair of their lower legs are safe now," herd manager Meg Puckett said in a Facebook post.

"In the past, we've had to remove horses for medical treatment when they've gotten tangled up in fishing line, or even eaten it. ... There are six young horses on the beach this fall and like babies of all species, they often put things in their mouths that don't belong there."

Puckett says at least one horse at the fund's rescue farm had to be "rescued" after being found "eating a fishing line." He survived without significant injury, but could not be returned to the wild, she posted.

Her post concluded with a plea for anglers to make "sure you aren't leaving any fishing line or hooks behind."

The Outer Banks barrier islands are among the country's popular fishing spots, according to [OuterBanks.com](#), with charters offered year round for inshore, nearshore and offshore deep sea fishing.

Corolla, at the north end of the Outer Banks, is home to about 100 [wild horses](#), and the males are notorious for being unpredictable and violent, particularly when sparring over turf or females.

The horses, which are descended from mustangs brought by early settlers, have adapted to a harsh environment where food is restricted to sea oats, coastal grass, acorns and persimmons. Their chief source of water is natural springs found in the maritime forest.

Deaths in the herd are often linked to [human interaction](#), including being struck by four-wheel drive vehicles on beaches and choking on unfamiliar food that tourists have provided illegally, McClatchy News has reported.

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