

## Shackleford Banks Horse Herd Update January 22, 2009

Winter sometimes brings snow to the banks. This year the snow of January 20<sup>th</sup> persisted, at least in protected places, for two days while the temperature hovered around freezing. The horses' dense long coats stand on end to trap body heat and help keep them warm. This twenty-three year old alpha stallion (below) is watching another harem going by at a fast pace to generate some body heat but he has opted not to challenge the other alpha in a fight.





The horses also stay warm by taking advantage of windbreaks offered by the dunes and thick shrubs. Above, a sister (background) and her younger brother share a place out of the direct cold wind in the lee of some myrtle bushes. The filly was born in 2007; the colt is 8 months old. They dozed here for many minutes in the typical resting-a-hind-leg stance before resuming grazing. Digestion of forage provides energy and creates body heat, so these wild horses spend the majority of their time grazing.

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**Source: Cape Lookout National Seashore, Wildlife Biologist - Horses**