



Facts about the Bureau of Land Management's Wild Horse and Burro Program

FACT 1: Since 1971, 22.2 million acres of land have been removed as wild horse habitat.

- **In 1971**, wild horses and burros roamed on *53.8 million* acres of land, of which *42.4 million* acres were under the BLM's jurisdiction. Herd Areas and Herd management Areas were created on those areas managed by the BLM as mandated by Congress with the passing of The Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act.
- **Today** the BLM manages wild horses and burros in subsets of these Herd Areas (known as Herd Management Areas) that comprise *31.6 million* acres, of which *26.9 million* acres are under BLM management. (Total number of Herd Management Areas: 177.)

DWINDLING HABITAT

53,800,000: Acres of land on which wild horses were found in 1971.

42,400,000: Acres of BLM land on which wild horses were found in 1971

31,600,000: Acres of land on which wild horses found today.

26,900,000: Acres of BLM land on which wild horses are found today.

Wild horse habitat has decreased by 41% since 1971, including a net loss of 15.5 million acres of BLM land from which wild horses have been eliminated.

FACT 2: About four out of every 10 federally protected wild horses and burros live not free on the range, where they belong, but in a government holding facility.

- The Bureau of Land Management estimates that 59,483 wild horses and 13,191 burros are roaming on BLM-managed rangelands in 10 Western states based on the latest data available, compiled as of March 1, 2017.

- As of March 2017, there were approximately 44,952 wild horses and 1,063 burros in government holding facilities (13,234 in short-term holding pens, 32,186 in long-term holding pastures in the Midwest and 595 in eco-sanctuaries).

FACT 3: The BLM intends to reduce the wild horse and burro population down to the level that existed in 1971 when Congress deemed that they were “fast disappearing” and needed to be protected.

- The BLM estimates that there were 25,300 wild horses in 1971 when Congress passed the Wild Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act.
- The BLM has set a national “Appropriate Management Level” (AML) of just 26,715 wild horses and burros. The agency is scheduling roundups to reduce the current estimated population down to this low number. The national AML would leave about 1 horse or burro for every 9,171 acres managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

DWINDLING POPULATION

2,000,000:	Number of wild horses that roamed the West at the end of the 19 th century.
25,300:	Number of wild horses in 1971 when wild Free Roaming Horses and burros Act was passed
59,483:	Current estimated wild horse population
13,191:	Current estimated wild burro population
26,715:	BLM target wild horses and burro population
< 70,000:	Number of federally listed, endangered big horn sheep in the West.

The BLM intends to drive the number of wild horses and burros in the U.S. down to the number that existed in 1971 when Congress passed a law to protect them because, at the time, they were deemed to be “fast disappearing from the American scene.”

FACT 4: Wild horses and burros are vastly outnumbered by privately owned cattle and sheep on BLM lands. Wild horses are restricted to just 9.1 percent of BLM lands, which they must share with livestock. Yet even on the small amount of BLM land designated as wild horse habitat, the BLM allocates the majority of forage to private livestock, not wild horses.

- The BLM administers about 245 million acres of public lands (more than any other federal agency). Livestock grazing is authorized on 155 million acres of those lands.

Wild horses are restricted to 26.9 million acres of BLM land.

- Authorized livestock use on BLM lands for 2016 was 12 million Animal Unit Months (AUM's). That's the equivalent of 1 million cow/calf pairs. (1 AUM = 1 horse, 1 cow/calf pair, 5 sheep.) Authorized wild horse use on BLM lands is 320,580 AUMs.

Fact 5: Welfare Ranching is the driving force behind the mass removal of wild horses from public lands. The cattlemen's lobby wants to maintain access to taxpayer-subsidized, commercial livestock grazing on public lands.

- The BLM charges ranchers \$1.87 per AUM. That compares to a 2016 market rate for private land ranching of about \$20 per animal per month.
- A 2015 Center for Biological Diversity study estimated that the costs to U.S. taxpayers for public lands grazing amounted to more than \$1 billion over a decade.

Fact 6: A cost-effective and humane alternative to roundup & removal is available, but it is not being adequately implemented by the BLM.

- A 2013 economic model published in the peer-reviewed Journal of Zoo and Wildlife Medicine found that the BLM could attain its management goals within 12 years using fertility control. The study found that using fertility control could save \$8 million at one Herd Management Area alone. "It stands to reason that such an approach could result in a cost-savings of tens of millions of dollars" if PZP were used throughout BLM lands, rather than removing wild horses from public lands and placing them in holding facilities.
- PZP fertility control has been shown to be effective and safe. As a non-hormonal vaccine, it has minimal effects on behavior.
- BLM is underutilizing PZP and continuing the large-scale and fiscally unsustainable removal of wild horses from public lands in the West. In 2016, BLM used about 67% of its budget spent to roundup, remove and stockpile horses; just 4% spent on fertility control to manage horses on the range.
- BLM's failure to implement PZP adequately resulted in more than 46,700 wild horses and burros warehoused in government holding facilities by the December

2016, costing taxpayers about \$50 million annually to house, feed and care for them. <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/about-the-program/program-data>

UNSUSTAINABLE CYCLE OF ROUNDUP, REMOVAL & STOCKPILING

- **21,145:** Number of wild horses removed from the range 2012-16
- **12,572:** Number of wild horses and burros adopted through BLM adoption program 2012-16
- **1,025:** Number of wild horses sold by BLM 2012-16
- **13,234:** Number of wild horses and burros in short-term holding facilities as of March 2017
- **32,186:** Number of wild horses and burros in long-term holding facilities as of March 2017
- **595:** Number of wild horses in eco-sanctuaries as of March 2017
- **46,015:** Total number of wild horses in holding facilities as of March 2017

COSTS

- **\$2.42:** Per day per horse cost in long-term holding (\$28.42 M divided by 32,186 horses divided by 365 days)
- **\$4.35:** Per day per horse cost in short-term holding (\$21.02 M divided by 13,234 horses divided by 365 days)
- **\$135,452:** Per day cost to taxpayers to maintain horses in holding facilities

FY 2016 BUDGET

- **\$28.42 million:** Long term holding costs
- **\$21.01 million:** Short term holding costs
- **\$3.06 million:** Roundup/Removal
- **\$340,000:** Fertility control
- **\$2.25 million:** Monitor HMAs, construct / maintain range projects)
- **\$7.89 million:** Adoption, sales and compliance inspections
- **\$78.298 million:** Total FY 2016 expenditures
- **\$80.555 million:** Total FY 2016 enacted budget

67% of budget spent to roundup, remove and stockpile horses; just 4% spent on fertility control and other measures to manage horses on the range.

Fact 7: The threat of slaughter for human consumption is a danger that is ever-present for mustangs that have been rounded up and removed from the range.

- An average of 127,000 horses were trucked to slaughter plants in Mexico and Canada from 2008-15, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- The terror, trauma and pain that horses endure in transport to slaughter houses and on the slaughter floor – where they have been documented to have their throats cut while they are fully conscious – is the ultimate betrayal of these animals who are our companions and partners in competition, work and recreation. They are the free-roaming descendants of the horses we rode in on.
- The foreign market for horsemeat is driving the sale of U.S. horses for slaughter. Americans do not eat horsemeat.
- Under a 2004 sale authority law, commonly called the “Burns Amendment,” BLM is directed to sell “without limitation” wild horses age 10 and older or younger horses who have not been adopted after three tries. BLM has sold more than 5,900 wild horses and burros since 2005. The 4,100 sold between 2005 and 2010 were sold for an average of just \$17 apiece.
- Although it is the BLM’s policy not to sell or send any wild horses or burros to slaughter, truckloads of these “sale authority” horses are sold from long-term holding facilities.
- The solution to the problem of unwanted horses in the U.S. is not slaughter, but rather responsible breeding and humane euthanasia.

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