



Animal Welfare Institute

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Words to Keep Them Wild and Free

Worthy of Protection

"They [wild horses and burros] belong to all the American people. The spirit which kept them alive and free against almost insurmountable odds typifies the national spirit which led to the growth of our Nation. They are living symbols of the rugged independence and tireless energy of our pioneer heritage." -- ***Senate Report (Interior and Insular Affairs Committee), June 25, 1971***

"The committee wishes to emphasize that the management of the wild free-roaming horses and burros be kept to a minimum both from the aspect of reducing costs of such a program as well as to deter the possibility of "zoolike" developments. An intensive management program of breeding, branding, and physical care would destroy the very concept that this legislation seeks to preserve. ... leaving the animals alone to fend for themselves and placing primary emphasis on protecting the animals from continued slaughter and harassment by man." -- ***Senate Report (Interior and Insular Affairs Committee), June 25, 1971***

"It is the expressed intent of the committee to remove the possibility of monetary gain from the exploitation of these animals." -- ***Senate Report (Interior and Insular Affairs Committee), June 25, 1971***

"Wild" by Nature

"The wild horse may in fact be an exotic species in Australia, New Zealand, and a few other locations around the world, but it is certainly not so in North America. Horses evolved on this continent only to later disappear, possibly at the hand of man. After what can only be viewed as seconds on the hands of evolution's clock, the horse was returned by the same hand to resume its place among the same animals and plants with which it had evolved. To label the North American wild horse as an exotic ignores the facts of time and evolutionary history." -- ***Into the Wind by Dr. Jay F. Kirkpatrick, 1994***

"... after years of domestication, they [wild horses] have adapted so successfully to life in the wild. If these horses are really as healthy and as sound as they appear, then there is probably a lot we can learn from them.... For this reason, I have come to think of them as embodying the spirit of the "natural horse," nature's model of the ideal horse fitted to the rigors of survival without the need of human intervention." -- ***The Natural Horse by Jaime Jackson, 1992***

No Overpopulation

"How are continuing drought conditions likely to affect Nevada's wild horse and burro populations? -- Census data suggests that continuing drought conditions are resulting in reduced reproductive rates for many wild horse herds throughout Nevada. Many of Nevada's herd management areas (HMAs) are currently below appropriate management level (AML) due to lower reproduction and the removal of excess horses since FY2000." -- ***BLM handout distributed to the Nevada Wildlife Commission, April 2003.***

"One of the major focuses of conservation biology and genetic management of small populations is the preservation of genetic variability. This topic is of particular relevance to the Wild Horse and Burro Program because the majority of wild equid populations managed by the BLM are kept at population sizes that are small enough for the loss of genetic variation to be a real concern. Because a loss of genetic variability can lead to a reduction in fertility or viability of individuals in a population, it is critical that genetic considerations be included in management plans for wild equid populations." -- **"Genetic Variation in Horse Populations" by E. Gus Cothran, PhD., Department of Veterinary Science, University of Kentucky in BLM Resource Notes, No. 27.**

"... only 25% of the 186 herds under active management have a population objective of greater than 150 horses. The small size of these herds raised concerns about long-term maintenance of genetic viability and questions on the best methods to manage population sizes to sustain genetic variation.... At low population numbers, dramatic loss of genetic variation over a short period is possible. Low genetic variability can result in decreased fecundity, increased mortality, decreased disease resistance, and an overall loss of vigor." -- **Singer, F.J. and K.A. Schoenecker, compilers. Managers' summary - Ecological studies of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, 1992-1997. U.S. Geological Survey, Midcontinent Ecological Sciences Center, Fort Collins, CO, 2000.**

"From an estimated population of 14,000 in 1974 to an estimated AML of 2,750 in 2005, there will be an 80% reduction in the wild burro population.... Wild burro habitat has been reduced by 45%." -- **"A Strategy to Achieve and Manage Wild Burros at Appropriate Management Levels," BLM, June 2000.**

Wild Horses and Burros as Scapegoats

"Wild horse removals have not demonstrably improved range conditions for several reasons. First, wild horses are vastly outnumbered on federal rangelands by domestic livestock.... Second, wild horse behavior patterns make the horses somewhat less damaging than cattle to especially vulnerable range areas.... Third, wild horse removals have taken place in some locations not being damaged by widespread overgrazing.... Fourth, in many areas where wild horse removals have taken place, BLM authorized livestock grazing levels have either not been reduced or have been increased thereby largely negating any reduction in forage consumption. - **GAO Report, "Rangeland Management: Improvements Needed in Federal Wild Horse Program," August 1990.**

"The Environmental Protection Agency concluded that riparian conditions throughout the West are now the worst in American history - livestock grazing is a primary reason." -- **"Land Held Hostage" by Thomas L. Fleischner, Ph.D., in Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West, edited by George Wuerthner and Mollie Matteson, 2002**

"BLM could not provide us with data to demonstrate where wild horse removals have materially improved the specific areas from which they have been removed." - **GAO Report, "Rangeland Management: Improvements Needed in Federal Wild Horse Program," August 1990.**

BLM's Failure

"Little has changed since the 1990 GAO report. Formal BLM determinations of wild horse carrying capacities are as elusive as the creatures themselves. Wild horse management decisions continue to be made within the BLM on a political rather than a scientific basis and in the political balance between horse and cow, the cattle industry almost always wins. - **Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, "Horses to Slaughter: Anatomy of a Coverup within the Wild Horse and Burro Program of the Bureau of Land Management," April 1997.**

Beginning a few years after publication of *Desertification*, and continuing through the mid-1990s, the General Accounting Office prepared a number of reports – some of them scathing indictments – on the grazing program of both the BLM and Forest Service.... The GAO consistently identified overgrazing as the principal cause of deteriorating western range conditions. -- ***The Western Range Revisited* by Dr. Debra L. Donahue, 1999.**

"The federal government has even taken to rounding up thousands of wild horses and burros and handing them over to ranchers and others in the misguided belief that these small numbers of animals pose a competitive threat to the millions of cattle grazing on public lands." -- ***Beyond Beef: The Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture* by Jeremy Rifkin, 1992.**

"The government's continued lackadaisical attitude toward the mustangs makes it necessary for private conservation groups to constantly remain alert and follow the administration and enforcement of the law. Otherwise, the horses' traditional enemies will succeed in slowly but surely eliminating them." -- ***The Politics of Extinction* by Lewis Regenstein, 1975.**

Save Money and Wild Horses and Burros

"...reducing authorized grazing levels would likely be cheaper than wild horse removals to achieve the same reduction in forage consumption. BLM's livestock grazing management program operates at a substantial loss. Reducing the size of the domestic livestock program could, if accompanied by proportionate reductions in management costs, generate significant savings. Further livestock reductions in place of wild horse removals would save the substantial expense of rounding up and disposing of the horses. -- ***GAO Report, "Rangeland Management: Improvements Needed in Federal Wild Horse Program, August 1990.***

"Changes in federal policy on grazing on public lands will not lead to a catastrophic collapse of the economies of the West. Only a tiny sliver of those economies rely on federal grazing." -- ***"Taking Stock of Public Lands Grazing" by Dr. Thomas M. Powers in Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West, edited by George Wuerthner and Mollie Matteson, 2002.***

"Propped up by more than \$100 million last year in taxpayer subsidies, a small number of ranchers continue a practice that began in the Wild West 150 years ago... Who benefits? Mostly the rich. The Mercury News reviewed more than 26,000 federal billing records and found corporations, millionaires and 'Rolex' ranchers dominating the public range." -- ***"Cash Cows" by San Jose Mercury News staff writers, Paul Rogers and Jennifer LaFleur, in the San Jose Mercury News, November 7, 1999.***