

Q&A for WHB Fireside Chat Held 8-23-2023

Question from Stephanie S: Has the BLM ever done anything useful? It sounds like it a waste of taxpayer dollars. Maybe the BLM should be eliminated.

Answer from Ginger: The BLM rarely does anything useful when it concerns their wild horse and burro program. They are, for the most part, a corrupt and wasteful agency benefitting livestock ranching operations. That said, there are a few good people at the lower levels that actually care about the wild horses and burros, and we support them even though their good ideas are usually overruled by the higher-ups. Here is our post about some really good local BLM staffers who have made a difference for one herd:

<https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/wild-horse-herd-safe-from-roundups-in-colorado/>

And, here is a post about the wasteful spending and the livestock operators who get rich from it:

<https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/wild-horse-roundups-for-profit/>

Response from Bob Price- Development Dir. IDA to Everyone: Please make sure to sign and share our Alert - Stop the Out of Control Bureau of Land Management -

<https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/bureau-of-land-management-fish-springs-wild-horses/>

Comment from robert d: they want to hide their deeds that's for sure!

Response from Ginger: The BLM hides everything they can, and when someone uncovers something awful they are doing, they either deny it, or transfer blame.

Question from Lisa S: Isn't that a violation of right to know????!!! Freedom of information??!!

Answer from Ginger: Yes, just about everything BLM hides is a violation and advocates are continually filing **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)** documents to get answers. Sometimes the FOIA "answers" come back heavily redacted (blacked out areas) and often they take six months or longer to get any answers at all. The whole system is set up to deter our efforts.

Question from Debbie W: Is it possible to use drones?

Answer from Ginger: We answered the questions about drones during the zoom. The use of drones or any airborne objects are illegal during government operations using helicopters or other aircraft. They would be brought down and the owner/operator prosecuted.

Comment from Judi S: Yes, I'm sure if drones fly lower it would be allowed.

Answer from Ginger: No, they are not allowed for these types of government operations. See photo - you cannot fly lower than that! The helicopters swoop up and down as "needed" and a drone would not be able to adjust in time and would be considered illegal interference. Helicopters rise, drop low (photo), and change direction quickly. Drones could never "always fly under" the helicopter to avoid collision.



Comment from Karen D: We need to ask the appropriations committee to stop funding until the BLM is investigated. They are not following protocol or CAWP and are focused on round-ups. They took out over 2000 horses in 2 days in Nevada in severe heat with 36 deaths...

Response from Ginger: We agree wholeheartedly and have written many posts and action alerts about this. The recent deaths in Nevada are heartbreaking and common for the way BLM does all their roundups. Here is a post about another one:

<https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/wild-mustangs-chased-in-90-degree-heat-under-false-emergency/>

Comment from Logan S: Of course they wouldn't let you close, they know what they're doing is bad.

Response from Ginger: You are absolutely correct, Logan. Their placement of public observers is very calculated and deliberate to try to avoid any potential photographs of the atrocities. Many years ago, the BLM allowed public observers to be in much closer proximity to the trap sites, with good views of the chases. Then, when horrific photographic evidence was produced, showing the abuse and brutality, the BLM found ways to avoid this scrutiny and started their protocol to take the observers far, far away, and hide everything possible.

Comment from Stephanie S: where is momma?

Answer from Ginger: We answered the question about the tiny baby alone in the back of the trailer during the live portion. If BLM identifies which mares and foals are together, the mares are put in the front of the trailer and the foals in the back section so they won't get accidentally

trampled. However, some of the roads they must travel down are so rutted and washed out, the babies will be flung about anyway.

Question from jean p: what are they planning to do next. where will they hit for the next roundup. can you find out and let us know beforehand. before the roundup

Answer from Ginger: The BLM posts its roundup schedules yearly, and periodically revises and changes them. This is a link to the current one:

<https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2023-09/National%202024%20%20Gather%20Schedule.%20Revised%20Sept28.pdf>

This is the prior schedule for the 2023 roundups; you can see some changes:

<https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2022-12/National%202023%20%20Gather%20Schedule.pdf>

Question from robert d: what do you mean to private property aren't these horses the property of your/my federal govt or what?

Answer from Ginger: Yes, these horses "belong" to all Americans and they reside on OUR public lands. However, the BLM is the agency mandated to oversee the horses and our public lands and they make up excuses and reasons why the horses must be removed "for their own good" and for the health of the land. At many roundups, the BLM makes arrangements with a private landowner (rancher near the HMA) to set up *temporary* holding pens on their private land so that the public can be excluded. After capture in the trap on public land, the horses are immediately taken to that private landowner's property. This is a deliberate action by the BLM to hide everything from the public.

Comment from jean p: we need some lawyers

Response from Ginger: lawsuits are not only extraordinarily expensive, but they are tricky as well, and can cause more harm if the case is lost. Regarding the expense, some say we should find and hire pro bono lawyers. That is easier said than done! There are a few attorneys and groups like Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) who do some pro bono work, but they choose their cases very carefully and WHB issues are not on the top of the list. Believe me, many have tried to find pro bono lawyers for WHB cases, and thoroughly looked everywhere. That said, quite a few lawsuits HAVE been done over the years and have cost the plaintiffs a lot of money. A few cases have been won and others have delayed roundups with temporary rulings. The main worry is, if a case is lost to a poor judge, or a technicality, that sets a precedent for that issue and makes it nearly impossible to win on that issue if ever brought before a court again. So, we must be very careful in which BLM decisions to challenge. Here is a link to an article about a current litigation to stop a huge roundup that would decimate herds in Wyoming: <https://www.wyomingnewsnow.tv/2023/05/10/coalition-files-lawsuit-over-government-plan-eradicate-one-third-wyomings-wild-horse-population/>

Question from Linda W: Is the temporary private land where they do their "elective euthanasias"?

Answer from Ginger: Yes, mostly, but with exceptions. For example, if a horse breaks their neck or leg at the trap site, they are put down there (shot). For the "elective" murders like club foot, blind in one eye, etc., that would be done later, either at the temporary holding pens on private property, if that is where the temporary holding is. Or they may wait until they get the horses to the government pens called short term holding, many of which are on private property (making millions of our taxpayer dollars for the property land owners).

Comment from Lisa L: An investigative journalist can help to raise awareness about the roundups. Any contacts would be much appreciated!

Response from Ginger: Yes, for sure. However real "investigative journalists" are few and far between. Our friend Vickery Eckhoff of The Daily Pitchfork (<https://dailypitchfork.org/>) is one of the best. Most other journalists simply take the press releases and info from the BLM propaganda machine and regurgitate it as "truth." They don't do any deep digging for the truth. Even "60 Minutes" recently did a TV story entirely using the BLM misinformation (wild horses are "overpopulated," destroying the range, starving, etc.) without checking facts. Of course, many of us in the know contacted "60 Minutes" about the errors in their story, but they never did any retractions.

Question from Lisa R: What happens to these US horses once they go to 'private' land?

Answer from Ginger: There are several different types of facilities on "private land" so the answer varies. **1.)** On private land where BLM takes captured horses temporarily for sorting, anything can happen. There is no transparency, even with herds that all the horses are well known by photographers and other advocates. Some are never seen again with no explanation. **2.)** On private land where the BLM contracts with private landowners to hold horses and burros in "Short Term Holding" (STH) facilities, it is an arduous process to follow the animals through the system. The horses and burros are brought to these facilities for "processing" and holding. The advocates must try to find and ID horses themselves and then see what their BLM neck tag number is to try to follow them to see where they go next (adoption auction, sale authority, long term holding, or disappeared). This is extremely difficult when the private property only allows access to the public at rare certain times for viewing. Much of it has to be done if the BLM posts photos on their "online auction" website. Other times, the abuse at these STHs is only seen after the horse has been adopted:

<https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/wild-horses-colorado/>

Conditions at STH sites are abysmal. There is usually no shelter provided, and the horses and burros are kept in crowded, often disease-ridden drylot pens, with very minimal mucking and manure removal. Yet the landowners of these STH facilities on their private land make millions of our taxpayer dollars.

<https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/blm-horses/>

Many horses are kept under these "short term" conditions for a year or more.

3.) Older horses age 10 and up (by BLM guestimate), and those animals of any age offered for adoption 3 times with no success are considered "Sale Authority" and may be sold outright for as little as \$25. They are titled immediately and no longer protected by the WFRHB Act. These equines are lost for anyone trying to find out what happened to them, unless they are found in a kill pen where they were dumped for quick profit. Unpurchased wild horses and burros of this group will be sent by the BLM STH facilities to private land ranches (that also have private livestock) called "Off Range Pastures" (ORPs) for Long Term Holding (LTH) for the rest of their lives. Once sent to these ORPs, there is absolutely NO public oversight or transparency. We simply must "trust" that the ranch owner is taking some care to make sure the animals have enough to eat and sheltered areas. The well known celebrity, The Pioneer Woman and her husband, have one of these ORPs and they are paid handsomely by the BLM to have these sale authority horses on their cattle ranch. We have no way of seeing any horses on the ORPs to see if they are OK. And, then, there is **4.)** the BLM's tragic Adoption Incentive Program (AIP). The BLM pays adopters \$1000 each to take wild horses and burros, which then go to someone's private land. Some of these do go to good homes. However, many are simply put out on the private land until they have met the title requirement, and then sent to kill buyer auctions as soon as the titles are transferred to the "adopter." It is "double dipping" of the worst kind, getting paid twice for an animal they did nothing for except put them on their land. <https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/blm-adoption-incentive-program-and-horse-slaughter/>

Comment from Karen D: A movie or documentary about the plight of these wild horses would give attention to what is going on. It would be like what Black Fish did for SeaWorld. The public needs to know.

Response from Ginger: YES!!! There IS one and we need to bring it to the attention of more people! The documentary is hard-hitting and truthful. It was produced by our friend, Ashley Avis, the producer of the recent Disney film "Black Beauty." This documentary, called "Wild Beauty, Mustang Spirit of the West" is available now on streaming services like Amazon. WATCH IT and spread the word to everyone you know to watch it! Info here: <https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/new-film-exposes-government-atrocities-committed-against-wild-horses/>

Question from Ellen: How will the farm bill affect the horses?

Answer from Ginger: Answered during the live meeting. Basically, the SAFE Act language to prevent equines from being shipped across our borders to slaughterhouses in Mexico, Canada, and Asia is to be inserted into the Farm Bill. Because the Farm Bill comes up for a vote only every five years, it MUST be passed by Congress. We feel this new tactic gives us a better chance to get the SAFE Act, that has been introduced with good support but no success for

many years, passed. We must continue to contact our legislators to make sure the SAFE Act language STAYS in the bill which is required to pass. Recent IDA Alert about this: <https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/help-pass-safe-act-wild-horses/>

Comments about DOI Director Deb Haaland:

Response from Ginger: These comments were in reaction to my answer to an orally asked question about our advocacy's supreme disappointment in Deb Haaland, Director of the Department of the Interior (DOI). I had mentioned how we had such high hopes for her because when she was a U.S. Rep in the House, she signed all the wild horse support letters and bills put before her. Once she was appointed Director of DOI, she went completely silent on wild horse and burro issues and she refuses to engage or respond to advocates and even to political leaders like Governor Polis. She DOES however meet with members of the Public Lands Council (private ranchers using our public lands for the livestock they exploit).

Question from Mimi B: Can you provide names and contacts of Senators and Representatives that are supportive of the cause?

Answer from Ginger: There are several that are very good, and others who support by becoming cosponsors of bills in Congress like the SAFE Act. Vern Buchanan, Republican from Florida, introduced the SAFE Act in the U.S. House in this 118th Congressional session. A list of the current cosponsors can be found here:

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/118/hr3475/cosponsors>

Bob Menendez, Democrat from New Jersey, introduced the SAFE Act in the Senate. A list of the current cosponsors can be found here:

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/118/s2037/cosponsors>

Dina Titus, Democrat from Nevada, introduced the Wild Horse Protection Act, H.R. 3656, in the U.S. House in this 118th Congressional session. This is the bill to ban the helicopter roundups we have been talking about. A list of the current cosponsors can be found here:

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/118/hr3656/cosponsors>

There are a few others, like Joe Neguse (my Rep) who are stalwart supporters of our wild horses and burros who just haven't signed onto these bills yet as cosponsors, but they will. As you can see, these bills need a lot more support from cosponsors, which is why we ask you to write and call your legislators to support these bills!

Response from Ginger: All Administrations, both Democrat and Republican, have disappointed us on our animal advocacy issues. As you can see from the bill cosponsor lists above, most of our supporters are Democrats. However, Republican legislators are very important to us because we believe our issues, especially wild horse and burro issues, are

bipartisan! This is why it is so important for us to VOTE, and raise awareness of our issues, to put people in office who support our cause.

Question from Christopher K: How will passage of Safe Act impact horse roundups?

Answer from Ginger: While the main purpose of the SAFE Act is to stop the transport of equines to slaughterhouses across our borders, halting that pipeline will force better and more humane management options to occur because there will be no more room to warehouse the captured horses.

Question from Marina B: Is there no recourse against these men who fly the helicopters? Clearly they are breaking the law!

Answer from Ginger: The helicopter pilots and their livestock ranching parent companies have government contracts, and as such have certain exclusions to the WFRHBA Act because the BLM claims those exclusions as "protecting" our public lands and "saving" the wild equines from "starvation." All lies, of course, but until we convince Congress of this corruption, these exclusions will continue.

Question from Janet E: What about trail cameras along the routes?

Answer from Ginger: Great question which we answered in the live chat. Unfortunately, there is no "route." The horses are run for many miles, sometimes for over an hour. They continually try to double back and change direction to avoid the mechanical beast that is chasing them. Over thousands of acres, there is no way to have hundreds of trail cams, especially when there is no "trail." We discussed the one trail cam that was lucky enough to be set up in the trees at the Piceance (CO) roundup that recorded the horses running through the trees with the helicopter overhead. That trail cam recorded the temperature as 103 degrees (in the shade)! It was used to show the BLM lies that the temperatures "only" got up to the low 90's, so very useful, but it was the only capture over the thousands of acres, and many miles, of chases during the roundup.

Comment from PJ J:

Everyone here is asking such good questions and making such good observations!

The wild horses and burros need all of you badly.

They need thoughtful animal advocates like all of you here.

Thank you for your help 🐾❤️

Response from Ginger: Agree 100%! Thank you everyone!

Question from Barbara M: Is anything being done to appropriately adjust the AMLs on each HMA?

Answer from Ginger: Great question! There are no current legal or other actions regarding this except for individual herds in proposed roundups. One thing is that we have to be very

careful of what we “wish” for, because if we demand AMLs be adjusted, the BLM might use that ask to adjust them DOWN, citing drought and poor range conditions. We do continue to ask for upping AML adjustments in every *individual* BLM Scoping Document (SD) and Environmental Assessment (EA) put out for proposed roundups. We cite the 2013 National Academy of Sciences report (that the BLM paid over \$1,000,000.00 for and then ignored because the report called out the BLMs mismanagement and lack of scientifically derived AMLs). There is one herd where the AML has been adjusted UP, because of a successfully run management plan run by an extraordinary volunteer working with her local BLM staffers who are supportive of her: <https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/wild-horse-herd-safe-from-roundups-in-colorado/>

And,

<https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/watch-wild-horse-herd-success-story/>

Comment from Linda W: BLM is in CONSTANT violation of the 1971 WFRHB Act.

Response from Ginger: That is what we believe, but BLM sees it differently, and until we can convince Congress of our truths, the BLM is in the driver’s seat.

Comment from Julie N: Also fossil fuel groups will fight. we can work with them

Response from Ginger: I’m assuming you mean conservation and ecological groups who are opposed to the ramping up of fossil fuels on our public lands? We have reached out to many of them. To date, many are reluctant to get involved in WHB issues because they believe the BLM propaganda that WHBs are “overpopulated” and “degrading the ranges.” We must continue to convince them of the truth to get their help. Erik Molvar of the Western Watersheds Project is our staunchest supporter on rangeland issues, and Sierra Club has come around a little bit on WHB issues.

Question from Laurel M: What about trying different approaches, such as massive video trucks showing videos of the brutality of these roundups? Driving slowly around in highly trafficked areas in D.C. Putting a Call to Action, i.e., "Tax Dollars Torturing America's Horses for BLM's cattle lobbies?"

Answer from Ginger: These have all been done. In Defense of Animals had a parked video truck on the National Mall in DC as the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board was meeting and the BLM had their own booth on the Mall there. For this event, we partnered with Laura Leigh of Wild Horse Education to produce her video images into the continuously looping video on the truck. All images are copyright protected for WHE. You can find this disturbing video embedded in this press release that WHE and IDA put out together:

<https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/giant-video-reveals-gut-wrenching-reality-of-the-wild-horse-on-national-mall/>

Other video and billboard trucks have been periodically traveling around in DC, sponsored by Save Our Wild Horses and the Wild Beauty Foundation. These are expensive to do, and why advocacy organizations always need donations.

Question from Lady N: Can you get horse protectors to round the horses up and herd them into private properties out of public land to save them?

Answer from Ginger: Answered during the live chat. One, that is illegal; and Two, most of the private land adjacent to BLM land is owned by those private ranchers who want the horses gone...

Question from jean p: is the blm only listening to public land trust?

Answer from Ginger: The BLM listens to heavily funded livestock ranching organizations like the Public Lands Council, the Rock Springs Grazing Association, and others like them.

Question from Judi S: How frequently do they have these roundups?

Answer from Ginger: These roundups occur every year. In recent years, due to the awful Path Forward plan, they are capturing more massive numbers. Over 20,000 last year alone. The Path Forward plan was designed by a coalition of anti-wild horse groups like the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the two largest animal welfare organizations: the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)! True wild horse and burro advocacy organizations tried to give HSUS and ASPCA the benefit of the doubt, thinking they had been tricked. However, they have "doubled down" on their involvement and continue to promote the Path Forward plan, despite the horrendous outcome for America's wild horses and burros.

<https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/oppo-se-dangerous-hsus/-/aspca-deal-for-wild-horses-and-burros/>

Question from Janet E: Celebrity support draws tremendous attention to issues prompting amazing results. Has IDA reached out to celebs to get much needed help with this?

Response from Ginger: yes, we have. It is difficult to get requests through the celebrity "gatekeepers" to the actual celebrities themselves, especially the "A-listers." But sometimes we can get through to someone. Here is our latest:

<https://www.idausa.org/campaign/wild-animals-and-habitats/horse-protection/latest-news/medi-a-release-jann-arden-calls-for-mustang-mercy-in-wake-of-horrific-roundups-and-killings/>