

WESTERN JUSTICE



Wild Horses: Loved To Death

Quite simply, wild horses are being loved to death. This tragic fact is apparent now more than ever. The American West is gripped by drought, and grossly overpopulated horse herds are struggling, all too often unsuccessfully, to survive on extremely limited resources. It is highly ironic that the very same people who claim to love wild horses the most, are the ones entirely responsible for the horses' immense suffering.

Over the years, wild horse extremists have used litigation to block necessary and proper herd management, quite literally forcing herd numbers to expand far beyond appropriate management levels (AML). The Bureau of Land Management's efforts to properly manage herd numbers have been stopped at almost every turn by extremist lawsuits, which has allowed on-range populations to burgeon completely out of control.

The total AML for wild horses and burros in the West is 26,785, spanning 177 herd management areas (HMAs). This number was established in accordance with multiple use mandates for federally managed lands. Nevertheless, the most recent population estimates show that Western rangelands now have 86,189 total wild horses and burros.

For extremists, the highly romanticized concept of freedom is of much greater importance than the actual well-being of wild horses. Their alleged

“love” for wild horses has directly caused countless instances of horses thirsting or starving to death. To the extremists’ deranged way of thinking, a free wild horse dying a slow and miserable death of thirst and starvation is preferable to a captive wild horse living out his days with a full belly in long-term holding.

Wild horse extremists continually attempt to shift the blame for decimated rangelands onto ranchers and livestock. This willfully ignorant mentality pays no heed to grazing rights and long-established multiple-use range management policy, or to the fact that numerous western ranches are multi-generational. Maintaining rangeland health is of utmost importance to ranchers, since their operations rely on it from year to year, generation to generation. That said, many ranchers have not been able to utilize their seasonal grazing rights because of the excess of wild horses, which are on the range year-round, and in many cases have completely obliterated feed and water sources.

It is interesting to note that in many areas where wild horse and burro herds are suffering the most, cattle and sheep have been absent for decades; thus, there is no reasonable way that the utter destruction of resources in those areas can be blamed on domestic livestock. This is an inconvenient truth for the wild horse extremist crowd, who shamelessly rely on painting western ranchers as villains to garner donations from the well-meaning but largely misinformed public. In reality, wild horses need ranchers.

In the dwindling number of HMAs where domestic livestock is still seasonally grazed, wild horses and native wildlife depend on the water resources that ranchers develop and maintain. In fact, in many areas, were it not for ranchers’ springs, pipelines, troughs, and labor, there would be no water at all. There are more than a few ranchers across the West who keep their troughs full even when the livestock grazing season has passed, solely for the sake of wild horses and native wildlife. While so-called “advocates” naively rally around keeping wild horses free regardless of consequences, it is the ranchers who are out there doing what they can to actually keep the horses alive. But they can only do so much. Meanwhile, the extremist coffers fill as they bilk the public to fund their next lawsuit.

Just imagine if wild horse extremists had their way and all livestock was permanently removed from the range.

Presumably, it would be a wild horse extremist utopia—after all, when conditions allow, herd population can double every four years. Certainly, without ranchers there would be dramatically less water available for all rangeland animals, but that doesn't matter to wild horse extremists. After all, they have kept their idols free. Never mind that they are also free to starve and thirst to death. But don't forget-- without ranchers and livestock being present on the range, there would no longer be convenient scapegoats for the irreversible, unconscionable wreckage left behind by wild horse extremists' philosophical and ethical failings.

Population estimates:

https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/docs/2021-06/wildhorse_2021PopulationEstaimtes.pdf

