



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 23-275 COLORADO WILD HORSE PROJECT

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources,

I am submitting testimony today to express our support for SB 275, the Colorado Wild Horse Project. America's wild horses and burros occupy a special place in our state's history and deserve to be protected. That is why the ASPCA has long advocated for a humane, nonlethal, and comprehensive approach to the management of free-range wild horses across the West.

Wild horses and burros have enjoyed special legal protections since the passage of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. While these legal protections remain a critical component of a sustainable wild horse program, we have seen firsthand in Colorado the struggles the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) still have in effectively managing and implementing the Act.

SB 275 is an opportunity for stakeholders to come together and advance our shared goals of humane treatment of wild horses and burros, along with ecological health and fiscal responsibility. Doing nothing will not achieve these goals and worse, will likely continue to put these wild animals in harm's way. For more than a decade, the future of our wild mustangs has been under serious threat, but with this bill, we will be one step closer to converting what has been considered by many a lost cause into a success story.

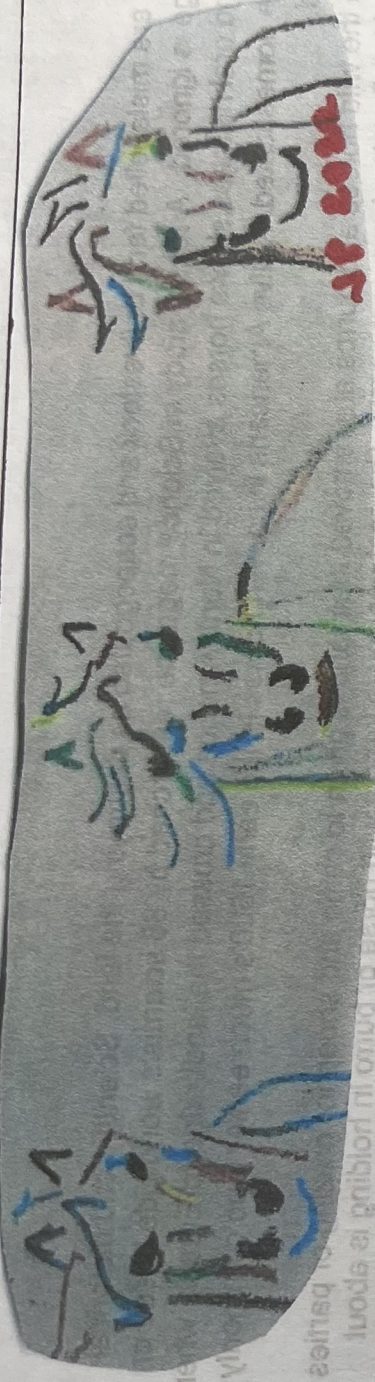
We support SB 275 because it will move Colorado closer to having an effective wild horse management program that is compassionate, nonlethal, and humane while also prioritizing range health, wildlife habitats, and the rural economy. We are thankful to the sponsors and the Governor's office for the work they have done to bring this bill forward. For the sake of our states' iconic herds, **we encourage you to pass SB 275.**

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to reach out with questions.

Sincerely,

Ali Mickelson

Ali Mickelson
303-819-1201
ali.mickelson@aspca.org
www.aspca.org



PLEASE SUPPORT THE WILD HORSE PROJECT SB 23-275

The wild horses and burros are in danger. Picture wild horses and burros peacefully grazing and playing together. The bands of horses, stallions, mares and foals are relaxed enjoying the company of their families. Suddenly the roar of the helicopter destroys the peace. As the helicopter comes closer the whirl of the blades kicks up dust that engulfs them. Terrorized, the wild horses and burros begin running for their lives. Pushed by the helicopter in the heat of summer and through uneven terrain toward the trap the wild horses lose their freedom and their families.

A young horse was chased by a helicopter during the Pancake, Nevada roundup over uneven terrain and broke a leg. The helicopter continued pushing the horse running on three legs. The horse finally was shot. At the recent Piceance, Colorado roundup horses were forced to run in the summer heat including newly born foals and pregnant mares. Horses were run into a barbed wire fence. Horses at the Twin Peaks, California roundup were crowded so tightly horses were climbing on each other trying to escape. Many are killed or injured during the roundups.

Losing their freedom and their families they face living in crowded dirty corrals. Shelter from the sun, the rain, the wind and the snow is not available. Proper food and water is not always given and diseases are common. Medical care is very limited and horses are shot. Last year at a BLM holding facility in Canon City, Colorado, 150 horses died. The horses were rounded up in 2021 and had not been vaccinated. There are 2500 horses there. A BLM facility in Wheatland holding 2700 horses just reopened after a year of quarantine due to strangles. The Litchfield corrals which has 700 wild horses and burros just closed due to an outbreak of strangles. In processing males are gelded, many die from the procedure. Females are treated with drugs such as PZP and Gonacon. Gonacon can cause permanent sterility. Effects of these drugs are not completely known. The claim of overpopulation is unproven.

Most of the wild horses are destined to live in long-term facilities run by private owners. Public access is prohibited. More than 60,000 wild horses are currently in holding. The BLM eventually puts some of the wild horses and burros up for adoption. In 2022 there were 7,793 adoptions. An incentive bonus of \$1,000 is paid after a year. Guidelines require an adopter to provide appropriate shelter, food and care. Unfortunately BLM doesn't monitor adoptions. The wild horses and wild burros are neglected, abused or sold for slaughter. A kill buyer Tom Davis adopted 1800 wild horses from the BLM and sold them for slaughter. He said he was using them in movies.

Horse slaughter is illegal in the United States. There were 20,000 horses exported to Canada and Mexico in 2022. Wyoming tried to legalize horse slaughter this year. Colorado tried to stop transport of horses for slaughter but the bill did not pass. Horses suffer tremendously. Crowded into trucks the horses are not fed or watered during the lengthy transport. Horses are trampled and suffer massive injuries such as gouged out eyes or broken bones. Some die on the trip. The United States Department of Agriculture states 92.3% of horses sent to slaughter are healthy and could be rehomed.

The Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971 entrusted government agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service and the United States Forest Service with their protection. The law is not followed. Under the pretext of overpopulation and lack of forage and water the wild horses and burros are removed from their land and separated from their families. The BLM sets an Appropriate Management Level (AML), the number of wild horses and burros a particular area can support. Often the AML is arbitrary. Herd Management Plans do not follow BLM regulations. Environmental assessments are not done. Courts have overruled some of the plans, particularly 10 year management plans.

They are mislabelled feral or livestock and scapegoated as destroying the land. Scientific and historical knowledge is ignored. A recent study in Science magazine researched by 86 scientists worldwide based on fossils and oral histories shows horses evolved in North America and crossed the landbridge to Eurasia where they were domesticated. Native Americans lived with horses in the early 1600's much earlier than commonly accepted.

Once the wild horses and burros are removed their land is given to cattle and sheep for grazing or parties interested in oil, natural gas or minerals. The cost per day to keep a wild horse or burro in holding is about \$5.00 per day. The grazing charge for a cow and calf is \$1.35 per month. The BLM paid Catoor Livestock \$559,250 for the Piceance, Colorado roundup. The 2022 budget was \$137.1 million. Congress sets the policy. Groups wanting the land contribute \$10,000 or more to congress people to sway their votes. Congressional representatives for oversight hearings.

Other land taken from the wild horses and burros is given to international corporations such as Barrick Gold based in Toronto or Rosemont Copper. Rosemont Copper is part of the Canadian company Hudbay. Lithium used in batteries is also mined. Amidst claims of drought mining requires 581,178 gallons of water to produce 2.2 lb of lithium.

Wild horses and burros managed by the United States Forest Service and the National Park Service are also losing their land. The Alpine horses in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest are labeled by the United States Forest Service as unauthorized livestock and sold at auction. Removing the horses costs \$467,000. The wild horses are also killed. Recently in the Apache-Sitgreave Forest 35 wild horses were shot. Another 30 wild horses have disappeared. In the neighboring Heber forest 40 wild horses have been killed. In southern Utah 16 wild horses were shot.

The National Park Service has 186 wild horses at Theodore Roosevelt State Park in North Dakota State Park. Even though the wild horses are very popular and bring as many as 850,000 international visitors the park wants to remove them.

Even though the wild horses are supposed to be protected by the BLM and homeowners in the Pine Nut Nevada HMA area signed waivers, the BLM trapped 18 horses forcing them to be relocated to a sanctuary. The BLM used 11 men, some of them armed to trap the horses. The BLM killed a horse found grazing on a lawn nearby.

There are some places where the wild horses are treated well and thrive. The National Park Service also manages wild horses at Assateague Island. The NPS manages the herd in Maryland. The horses in Virginia are managed by the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company through a special use permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

There are horses on Cumberland Island in Georgia. Cumberland Island is a National Seashore under the National Park Service but the horses are on their own and not managed.

The Salt River Wild Horses in Arizona are managed by a group through the state of Arizona. Ten of the Alpine wild horses sold at auction are cared for by a member of the Salt River Management group.

In Nevada's Wild Horse Range horses are collectively managed by a private group the Wild Horse Connection and the state of Nevada. New Mexico also has wild horses on private lands. The Wild Horse Refuge in Colorado was recently opened by Pat Craig.

There are sanctuaries and individuals who provide wild horses and burros with a good life. Rewilding allow the thousands of wild horses and burros removed to regain their freedom and promised protection.



Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources
 04/20/2023 01:30 PM
 SB23-275 Colorado Wild Horse Project
 Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Betty Davies For herself	<p>I Support SB23-275 - The Colorado Wild Horse Project</p> <p>Finally, a well drawn creative solutions Bill that involves many people that will work together for Wild Horses.</p> <p>Wild life depends on Wild Horses as they are the only ones that spread grass seeds and sagebrush seeds. Sage grouse, antelope, mule deer and elk increase with Wild Horses. It is cattle and sheep with multiple stomachs that eats grass, etc. From the roots that is destroying the Rangelands thus climate Change.</p> <p>It is human interception that is causing harm. Mother Earth will thrive without humans. It is full circle.</p> <p>The Denver Post survey shows that overwhelmingly the public does NOT want horse slaughter. Please listen and Do the Right Thing.</p> <p>First of all, it is NOT safe for human consumption. There are too many drugs and vaccines that makes it detrimental for consumption. It is certainly not USDA approved and America does not need the bad publicity of selling unsafe meat. Colorado is better than this.</p> <p>It has been mismanagement by BLM that has caused the problem. There needs to be accountability and oversight. Do not blame the Wild Horses. By the way, the sheep has been grazing Sand Wash Basin HMA much longer than BLM says. There are pictures. Again, there is no regulation.</p> <p>The horses has no problem co-existing with cattle, sheep, oil rigs, recreational use, etc. Yet, the BLM campaign is scapegoating the Wild Horses.</p> <p>Personally, I want to see Wild Horses and so many other people do too. It can be a tourist attraction for Colorado.</p> <p>The Colorado Wild Horse Project is a WIN/WIN.</p> <p>Please don't punish a breed that is self-sufficient and thrives. We can learn from this iconic species. We must keep Wild Horses as our lives may depend on it. Spain reveres their Wild Horses.</p> <p>There are Better Solutions - Be part of that.</p> <p>I thank the sponsors of this Bill.</p> <p>Sincerely, Betty Davies Bette7755@gmail.com 360-350-2908</p>

Renee Faulkner For themselves	For years I have had to bear witness to what amounts to nothing more than government sanctioned animal abuse when it come to the treatment and management of our wild horses and burros all across the west. The majority of the American stakeholders and taxpayers don't not approve of the way our government has reduced our National monuments into disposable trash. Our voices have been ignored, now it is time for a seat at the table. I urge the committee to advance this bill for a vote.