

36 Now Killed as Wild Horse Death Toll Rises in Arizona

\$35,000 Reward Still Up for Grabs as Agencies Investigate

ALPINE, ARIZONA, UNITED STATES ,
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Today, Animal Wellness Action, the Animal Wellness Foundation, and the Center for a Humane Economy weighed in further as eyewitnesses and wild horse advocates in Arizona are reporting an [additional 11 horses have been confirmed dead](#) in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, bringing the confirmed death toll from a carefully executed mass shooting to 36. Another 14 horses remain missing and are presumed dead. The first of the dead horses were discovered earlier this

month, and the death toll has continued to climb as advocates search for horses they know are missing. A combined total reward of \$35,000 has been offered by advocacy groups, including \$5,000 offered by Animal Wellness Action and Center for a Humane Economy, to bring the

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Scott Beckstead, director of campaigns at CHE



Wild Horses on Public Lands | Photo Credit: Marty Irby

perpetrators to justice. Despite the reward offer, officials have yet to announce any arrests or even any persons of interest in the case.

“With the confirmed death toll climbing, it becomes more clear that this mass shooting was carefully planned and carried out by someone who dislikes wild horses and wants to slaughter them,” said [Scott Beckstead](#), equine welfare specialist and director of campaigns for Center for a Humane Economy. “We encourage the investigating agencies to leave no stone unturned in their hunt for the person or persons responsible, as they pose a clear threat to other animals and to the public at large. We also hope

Arizona lawmakers will consider passing a law to give all wild equines in Arizona protections to address these massacres and indiscriminate killings."

"The continued mass execution of our iconic American wild horses in Arizona is a disgrace and we urge investigating agencies to seek answers from the most likely suspects, including public lands grazers who hold grazing permits in this area," said [Marty Irby](#), executive director of Animal Wellness Action, and a former 8-time world champion equestrian. "Intentionally killing horses to make room for more cattle to graze and ultimately raise cheap beef that is subsidized by the taxpayer is an affront that must end. We must hold those who engaged in these criminal acts accountable and punish them to the fullest extent of the law."

The killings have occurred against the backdrop of a bait and trap gather of the Alpine wild horses by the US Forest Service, which considers the animals to be stray livestock and thus not protected by the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Advocacy groups familiar with the horses have argued that that is wrong, that the herd has lived in this area since long before the law was passed, and therefore should be protected. To date the agency has trapped and removed 80 horses, 65 of whom have been placed into sanctuaries and private homes. While the Forest Service and some conservation groups complain the approximately 400 horses are damaging habitat for endangered species, at least 2,000 privately-owned cattle are currently USFS permit-grazing in this same location.

The nearby Heber herd of wild horses, who also live in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest but



Scott Beckstead on Range with Onaqui Wild Horses in Rush Valley, Utah



Marty Irby, Ashley Avis, and film crew at Onaqui site filming "Wild Beauty: Mustang Spirit of the West."

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are protected under the Act, have also been targeted with mass shooting. At least 40 horses from that herd have been found shot and killed since 2018. Despite reward offers in that case, investigators have made no arrests.

Animal Wellness Action is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote

enacting good public policies, and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

The Animal Wellness Foundation (Foundation) is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization with a mission of helping animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability. We organize rescue efforts and medical services for dogs and cats in need and help homeless pets find a loving caregiver. We are advocates for getting veterinarians to the front lines of the animal welfare movement; promoting responsible pet ownership; and vaccinating animals against infectious diseases such as distemper. We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and that alleviate suffering. We believe helping animals helps us all.

The Center for a Humane Economy is a non-profit organization that focuses on influencing the conduct of corporations to forge a humane economic order. The first organization of its kind in the animal protection movement, the Center encourages businesses to honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both.

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