

Unjustified Death Toll of America's Wild Horses Increases

Persistent cruelty noted at deadly roundups. Concerned advocates call for an immediate stop to roundups and an investigation of the Bureau of Land Management

COLDEN, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, July 23, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was assigned care and protection of America's wild horses and burros(WHB) with 1971's Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act. Since 1971, one half, 26,900,000 acres of land designated as WHB habitat has been stolen and given to ranchers and corporate livestock industries for grazing leases at taxpayer expense. Mining leases, that destroy ecosystems, are given while horses are displaced to taxpayer funded holding.



Nevada Wild Horses, photo courtesy of Scott Beckstead

The 2024 BLM roundup schedule permanently removes 19,000+ horses from public land (blm.gov). If they survive brutal, dangerous roundup processes and high roundup related mortality, they are condemned to an unnatural life of confinement.

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Laura Leigh, Wild horse Education, Founder and President

The Blue Wing Complex roundup is underway, scheduled July 8-August 18, in the Winnemucca BLM District. This gather removes 1,373 horses and 356 burros from 2,283,300 acres of unfenced public land. Only 40 horses will be returned.

Thus far, the death toll is much higher than average. Though there is a Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program (CAWP), there is no evidence that BLM abides by their

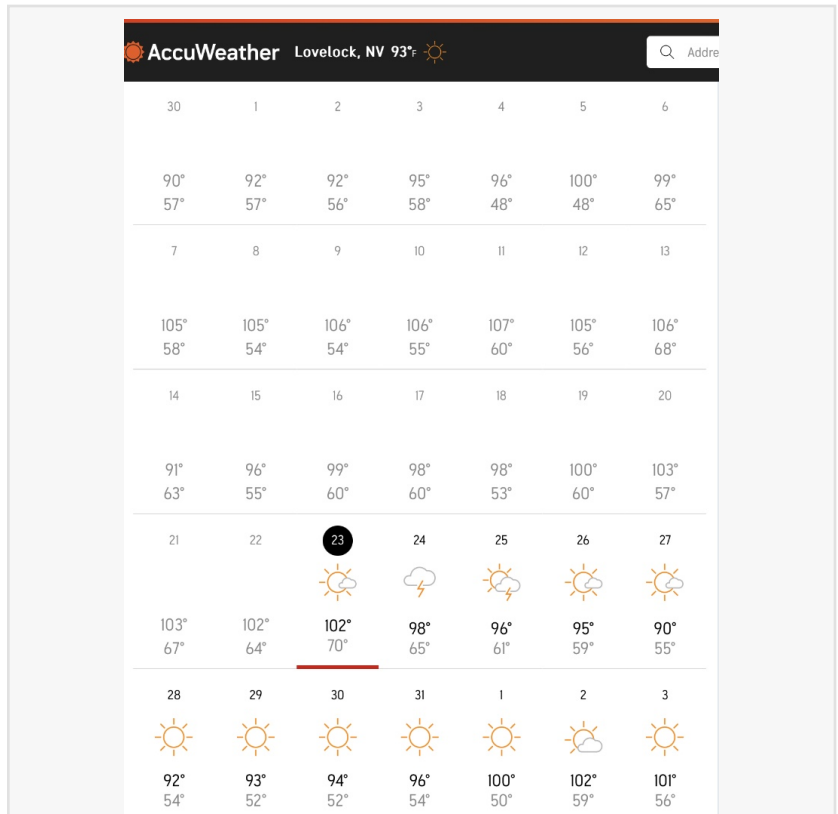
program. According to the CAWP Fact Sheet (blm.gov), "The Bureau of Land Management is committed to the health, welfare and safety of all wild horses and burros under the agency's management and care. CAWP formalizes that commitment by establishing standard operating procedures and handling practices for wild horses and burros."

A heat wave creating stifling, dangerous conditions has hit Nevada with triple digit temperatures, exceeding restrictions in CAWP policy.

"The recent actions of BLM in the Blue Wing roundup are deeply troubling and reprehensible. The tragic deaths of 28 (as of July 22nd) wild horses and burros, including foals succumbing to stress and exhaustion, and animals collapsing and dying in transit due to extreme heat, highlight a blatant disregard for animal welfare.

BLM's rush to clear federally protected wild equines from the range, to benefit private livestock grazing interests, not only violates its own animal welfare rules but also undermines its mandate to manage these animals humanely under federal law.", said law professor and equine advocate, Scott Beckstead.

BLM stops chasing horses before the hottest part of the day. They don't mention that captured horses are loaded into trailers (metal box on wheels) and shipped to short term holding. Standing in a metal box during the hottest part of the day, packed with stressed horses giving off body heat is an additional act of cruelty, and increases the danger for equines, evidenced by 5 deaths during transport in less than a week.



Ground temp on a sunny day can run 10-40 degrees higher than air temp



Nevada Wild Horse, photo courtesy of Heather Hellyer

The death toll as of July 22nd is 28, many euthanized with a gun shot by a BLM employee following very questionable diagnoses.

BLM started self-assessments and internal-assessments at gathers in 2021 and stated their plan to have third-party assessments in place for 2023. No evidence of third-party assessments show on the BLM website. The history of this agency clearly indicates that self- and internal-assessments are not likely reliable as they willingly continue to employ a contractor who was convicted in 1992 after he pled guilty to using his aircraft to hunt and shoot federally protected wild horses to be sold for slaughter, per 8/22 Animal Wellness Action report.

Trained BLM CAWP teams should be present each day but are often absent. Holding facilities can exclude public visitation. There is no accurate accounting of horse condition or death tolls. Roundup related deaths continue months after horses are in holding.

"5 horses/burros have dropped dead simply during transport. Another died from an injury that happened on a trailer, stated Laura Leigh, founder and President of Wild Horse Education, a non-profit organization that has observers at most BLM roundups. Leigh, who has been in attendance at the Blue Wing roundup stated, "This district, Winnemucca, logs the highest death rates in the country consistently. If Winnemucca personnel are in charge of a roundup in another district, the death rates rise." "To make matters more difficult", Leigh added, " they do not follow CAWP regulations in documenting deaths." "The death rate in this district is 3 times higher than the national average." (www.wildhorseeducation.org)

Beckstead added, "Cruelty and neglect must be condemned, immediate measures taken to ensure humane treatment and protection of these iconic animals. Congress must exercise oversight authority to hold BLM accountable and force the agency to adopt long overdue reforms that align with the wishes of American taxpayers who support wild equines."

Britta Hesla, legislative liaison and DC lobbyist stated, "CAWP appoints a project manager as judge, jury and executioner of every horse in a roundup. These individuals are making decisions based on personal opinions, not science. We ask that CAWP be overseen by the Department of Justice and members of a roundup team are held criminally responsible for misconduct and charged accordingly." Hesla continued, "In 2013 Congress sequestered stakeholders to evaluate BLM conduct and operating procedures. They found that overall justification for removing wild horses was unfounded and recommended numerous adjustments, including a reevaluation in 10 years.

For 2 years, Scientific and Wild Horse organizations have requested that Congress follow through on the reevaluation, to no avail." (www.national-academies.org)

Further requests from Hesla include:

□ Veterinarians are employed by objective third party organizations, and their evaluations are

made available.

□ Media crews have full access to roundups, including presence on helicopters, based on 1st Amendment rights.

□ The BLM oversight committee immediately address accumulating inhumane and abusive practices and be held accountable for lack of oversight if aforementioned are unaddressed.

□ Follow up reevaluation by the National Academy of Sciences.

“Lastly, the wild horse advocacy community has been offering solutions that alleviate taxpayer burden. Congress has failed to listen. We, ultimately, demand that wild horse and burro management be turned over to equine experts and organizations, to manage appropriately and humanely. Taxpayers will not continue to tolerate brutal, horrific helicopter chases and deaths.” concluded Hesla.

Unjustified deaths are rising as quickly as numbers of unjustified roundups. These are legitimate reasons to stop all roundup activity until a complete investigation can be undertaken by an impartial third party.

Barbara C. Moore and Britta Hesla
Global Equine Action Response Team
GEAR-Team@gmail.com

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