

Fact Sheet

Reducing the Deficit and Making Government Run Better: A New Way Forward

How Congress can reduce spending while protecting America's wild mustangs

WILD HORSES AND BURROS

As the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction works to achieve massive cuts in federal spending, one of the ways to reach this goal is to require the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to utilize technologically advanced, humane alternatives to the costly and wasteful process of rounding-up and removing protected wild horses and burros from our public lands.

COST

The BLM is currently holding approximately 41,000 horses and burros in short- and long-term holding pens. In FY10, it cost taxpayers \$36.9 million (plus an additional \$2.1 million in FY09 "carryover" funding) for BLM to care for these animals. For years, the BLM has removed far more wild horses and burros from the range than it could possibly expect to adopt out, and as a consequence, the taxpayer burden associated with caring for these animals off the range has continued to skyrocket. For instance, between 2001 and 2007, the BLM removed approximately 74,000 wild horses from the range, but could only place 3,000 a year for adoption, with the rest kept in holding facilities at taxpayer expense. The annual cost associated with caring for one wild horse in a long-term holding facility is approximately \$500, and the average lifespan of a wild horse in captivity is 30 years.

SAVINGS

The BLM could save nearly \$172 million over the next 10 years by using immunocontraception to manage wild horse and burro populations on the range instead of rounding up these animals and putting them in government holding facilities. By reducing annual removals from 7,600 (the planned figure for FY12) to 3,000 animals, and increasing fertility control from 2,000 (planned level for FY12) to 4,600 mares, the taxpayer savings over 10 years would be \$171,698,050. Immunocontraception to manage wild horse and burro populations in the West is not only more humane, as it would reduce the stress of round-ups and long-term holding in government pens, but it would also help the agency get off the fiscal treadmill of rounding up horses and keeping them on the government dole.

A significant reduction in the number of wild horses and burros gathered and removed from our rangelands annually, coupled with increased contraception, is the much needed solution to a growing fiscal problem. Removing horses from the range without implementing a robust program for preventative herd growth is unsustainable, and simply leads to a continual cycle of round-ups and removals, when the much more cost-efficient and humane management strategy of fertility control through immunocontraception is readily available. Conflicts can be managed on public lands and population numbers can be reduced without costly and inhumane roundups.

PROPOSED LANGUAGE

"No funds shall be used for the roundup of wild horses or burros, except for the purpose of immunocontraceptive population management or for emergency gathers of a limited number of horses due to extreme and immediate horse health or welfare concerns."

(cont'd on next page)

Projected federal government savings from using immunocontraception to manage wild horse and burro populations on the range instead of rounding up these animals and placing them in government holding facilities for the remainder of their natural lives:

Category of spending	Estimated \$ FY12-FY22
Projected holding costs for 46,000* animals (stallions and mares), if removed from the range over 10 years as BLM plans	\$181,248,050.00
Projected contraception costs for 23,000 animals (only mares) over 10 years, if proposed reforms are adopted	- \$9,550,000.00
TOTAL COST SAVINGS OVER 10 YEARS	\$171,698,050.00

*46,000 is based on BLM's plan to remove from the range approximately 7,600 wild horses and burros each year, and the agency's ability to adopt out at most 3,000 wild horses and burros each year, which would result in an additional 4,600 wild horses and burros being placed in holding facilities annually, and a total of 46,000 over 10 years. This does not include animals already in holding pens (41,000 as of September 2011). Estimated holding costs are based on FY 2008 rates of \$ 5.08 per day (or \$1,854.20 per year) for care of an animal in a short-term holding corral and \$ 1.27 per day (or \$463.55 per year) for care of an animal in a long-term holding pasture. Time periods that the animals spend in short-term holding before they are transported to long-term holding vary, but for purposes of this cost projection, it is assumed that each horse and burro removed from the range spends an average of one year in short-term holding before being transported to a long-term holding pasture. Projected contraception costs include gathering the mares and administering the vaccine three times per mare.