



May 18, 2021

The Honorable Debra Haaland  
Secretary  
Department of Interior  
Debra.Haaland@doi.gov

Sent via email

**Re: Bureau of Land Management, Wild Horse and Burro Program's Adoption Incentive Program**

Dear Secretary Haaland:

Together, our organizations have been steadfastly pressing for humane, proactive, and non-lethal management of the nation's cherished wild horses and burros because we believe they deserve a better future. We have envisioned a way to make that possible after decades of inaction and challenges for the agency's management program and are working collaboratively with diverse stakeholders who are willing to support effective, humane and non-lethal management of these animals.

This is why we were appalled by the recent New York Times article<sup>1</sup> which unveiled potential abuses of Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) adoption incentive program allowing these animals to be put in the slaughter pipeline. We request the program be immediately suspended until a thorough investigation into these allegations occurs and remedies are in place to ensure no more mustangs are siphoned from adoption to slaughterhouse.

The Trump Administration created this adoption incentive program as a way to move more untrained wild horses or burros into private care to reduce costs created by the growing number of animals removed from the range. Sadly, the allegations included in the New York Times article presents a very different picture of how the program is working compared to BLM's articulation of it<sup>2</sup> as it highlights the lack of oversight during the year the BLM retains title of the equines. It is distressing to hear that BLM employees may be telling adopters they could send these animals to slaughter after title transfers, and there are apparently inadequate background checks on prospective adopters. The Department of Interior must act swiftly to suspend the adoption incentive program while investigating systemic abuses, pursuing all available penalties for any violations discovered and working to ensure future abuses are prevented.

While we recognize that the animals discussed in the New York Times article were no longer considered BLM horses as title had already transferred, that does not lessen BLM's obligation to ensure that adopters do not have the intent of sending these horses to slaughter after title transfers

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<sup>1</sup> [Wild Horses Adopted Under a Federal Program Are Going to Slaughter - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/18/us/politics/wild-horses-adopted-under-a-federal-program-are-going-to-slaughter.html).

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/adoptions-and-sales/adoption-incentive-program>.



as stated in the affidavit they sign to enter the adoption program. Your agency must take a hard look at ensuring it is providing the necessary oversight over adopters and not turning a blind eye to nefarious activities.

Collectively, we have successfully secured language in federal spending packages that specifically prevents BLM and U.S. Forest Service wild horses and burros from being sold for slaughter. Additionally, we have long championed efforts to stop horses from being sent to slaughter here in the United States through the federal appropriations process and continue to have broad bipartisan support to permanently ban domestic horse slaughter and the export of horses abroad for that purpose.

We have long appreciated your leadership in Congress and we urge you to continue to work to ensure that these animals do not end up being slaughtered for human consumption. The horses and the public who care deeply about them deserve no less – and the future of this program depends on solidifying the confidence of Congress, the American public, and the advocates who work tirelessly to protect these animals from such a tragic fate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Perry".

Nancy Perry  
Senior Vice President, Government Relations  
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracie Letterman".

Tracie Letterman  
Vice President of Federal Affairs  
Humane Society Legislative Fund

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Neda M. DeMayo".

Neda DeMayo  
President  
Return to Freedom  
Wild Horse Preservation and Sanctuary

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Jennifer Hillman".

Jennifer Hillman  
Vice President, Wildlife  
The Humane Society of the United States