

5 MYTHS ABOUT WILD HORSES



1. There are no natural predators to control the population. Wild horses still have natural predators, but the U.S Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services works hard to change that. In 2016 the agency placated commercial livestock interests by killing 76,963 adult coyotes, destroyed 430 coyote dens containing uncounted pups, 3,791 foxes and 128 pup dens, 997 bobcats, 415 gray wolves, 407 black bears and 334 mountain lions.

2. Wild horses damage the range more than domestic livestock. Wild horses' digestive systems don't process seeds. The seed-bearing food they eat is replanted in their droppings. Fertilizer + seeds = inadvertent farmers. Because mustangs are nomadic, they do their own rotational grazing, moving where their food is in bloom. In theory, livestock is rotated, but ranchers whose livestock grazes public lands are often allowed to "self monitor."

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3. Wild horses overpopulate public lands. Estimates vary (National Academy of Sciences criticized Bureau of Land Management's sketchy data-gathering), but BLM admits commercial livestock outnumbers wild horses on public lands by at least 123-1. Wild horses that aren't removed have been pushed from historic territories into limited public lands habitat. In the last 5 decades, other uses -- including corporate ranching, gas, oil and mining -- have claimed 22.2 million acres.

4. Wild horses are not native to North America. Modern science, especially DNA testing, contradicts this myth. Paleolithic horses and modern equines share the same DNA. BLM's website encourages acceptance of old science, claiming "horses disappearance from the Western Hemisphere for over 10,000 years," despite facts that prove the window of "gone time" has narrowed to 7,000 years.

5. Wild horse management by BLM is humane. Interior Department websites have recently been data cleansed, but 2010 helicopter round-ups in the Calico Mountains of Nevada were well-documented. BLM reported 113 deaths from broken bones, ruptured eyes, hoof slough, and birthing "accidents" in which 40 mares suffered spontaneous miscarriages and bore dead foals. BLM claims not to sell captured mustangs to slaughter, but the Office of the Inspector General found 1700 wild horses were sold to a single kill-buyer 2008-2012.

"Wild at Heart: Mustangs and the Young People Fighting to Save Them" is available wherever books are sold.

