

PROMOTING THE HUMANE MANAGEMENT OF FREE-ROAMING HORSES

What is the problem with the current law?

The current law (Section 77-18-5):

- Puts an inappropriate entity in charge of herd management (UNM's Mammal Division of the Museum of Southwestern Biology). The Museum does not conduct this type of work and does not plan to do so.
- Inadequately promotes fertility control, allowing most herd populations to grow unchecked.
- Creates impossible barriers to the relocation of horses when it is necessary to sustain the health of both the horses and the land.
- Includes legal ambiguities that put horses at risk of entering the slaughter pipeline.

Community Stories



Photo Credit: Resident of Placitas

A Placitas resident crashed into a free-roaming horse in March 2025

"I was driving to work in the dark at 5:30 AM and struck a black horse that was standing in the road. I was driving under the speed limit and was extremely lucky to escape injury with the horse's head protruding through my windshield just inches from mine."

In April 2025, residents of Sandia Park, in Bernalillo County, reported a free-roaming mare was struck and killed by a car, leaving behind her yearling foal. "We're reaching out in frustration and sadness... The issue is only going to get worse."

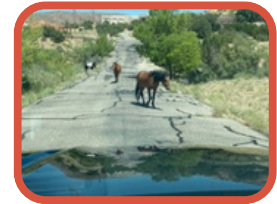
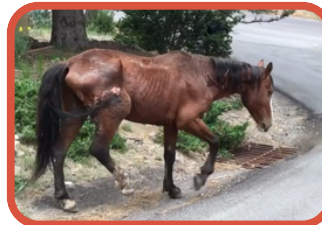


Photo Credit: Sandoval County horses by Mt. Taylor Mustangs



In June 2024, this underweight and injured free-roaming horse was filmed by a resident in Ruidoso. "This is sickening."

Photo Credit: still frame from the video recorded by a Ruidoso resident

70%
of New Mexico
Voters Oppose
Horse Slaughter

According to the most recent poll conducted by Lake Research Partners.

How can legislation help?

- Legislation needs to **fix the gaps and irregularities** in current state law that prevent humane relocation and population management of free-roaming horse herds.
- A strong new law should promote using **effective, science-based and humane methods** to stabilize herds and preserve lands where they graze.
- Finally, free-roaming horses should be **protected from cruelty and slaughter**.

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Under new legislation, how would free-roaming horses be managed?

Any near-term solution needs to account for the fact that there is currently **no statewide governmental agency with the authority and resources to directly manage free-roaming horse populations.**

Therefore, as proposed by previous legislation, the New Mexico Legislature should create a framework that allows for **tailored local solutions, led and implemented by free-roaming horse experts working with a local or state governmental entity.**

This framework has three components:

1. **Experts:** Persons, organizations, or businesses performing free-roaming horse management services must meet specific qualifications and become registered as approved "free-roaming horse experts" by the NM Livestock Board.
2. **Contracting Governments:** Local governments and state agencies may contract with registered free-roaming horse experts to develop herd management plans for local communities.
3. **Humane Standards:** Free-roaming horse experts must comply with enacted requirements (including humane handling and disposition of horses) to maintain their registration. The enforcement mechanism: Failure to comply would allow the NM Livestock Board to revoke registration, among other possible penalties.

What else will proposed legislation include?

- Provisions requiring the identification of horses that are relocated to captivity, such as through microchipping or freeze branding.
- Language to ensure adoptions are facilitated by licensed equine organizations with proven experience in successfully adopting out horses.
- Language making clear that it is illegal to slaughter, allow to be slaughtered, or export for slaughter free-roaming horses, or to release them into the wild from captivity or an adoptive home, and imposing criminal penalties for each offense.

What management options are being proposed?

All proposed management outcomes for free-roaming horses are the same as current law:

- Fertility control: Immunocontraception (e.g., PZP vaccine) for mares, or castration of stallions.
- Relocation to an equine rescue or retirement facility for adoption or sanctuary.
- Relocation to land that has the capacity to sustain the horse / herd, with landowner permission.
- Humane euthanasia—only for horses determined by a veterinarian to be suffering from a condition significantly impacting the horse's life that cannot be reasonably treated.

