



**1887 – 2011  
124 years of  
service to  
New Mexico's  
Livestock Industry**

“I think using animals for food is an ethical thing to do, but we’ve got to do it right. We’ve got to give those animals a decent life and we’ve got to give them a painless death. We owe the animal respect.”

***Temple Grandin, PhD, Colorado State University***

- Dr. Grandin teaches livestock behavior and facility design courses at CSU, consults with the livestock industry on facility design, livestock handling, and animal welfare.
- Authored over 400 articles in both scientific journals and livestock periodicals on animal handling, welfare, and facility design.
- Authored, "Livestock Handling and Transport." , "Animals in Translation" and "Animals Make Us Human" and others.
- Featured speaker at the Summit of the Horse, Jan 3-6, 2011

# Unwanted Horse Population



Dave Fly, DVM, State Veterinarian  
Water & Natural Resources Committee  
June 30, 2011



# U.S. Horse Population

2005 – 9.2 – 9.5 million horses

2007 - Last 3 U.S. horse slaughter plants closed.  
These plants processed approximately 100,000 head annually.

2007 - AVMA reports that horse slaughter exports to Mexico have in a single year increased by 312%, to more than 44,000 horses. Exports to Canada have also increased significantly (42,000).

2011 – Over 100,000 unwanted horses annually.  
Exports have increased to 138,000 head.

## How are horses used?

- 1) 81% - Recreational riding
- 2) 53% - Showing and Competition (non-racing)
- 3) 33% - Breeding
- 4) 19% - Other
- 5) 10% - Racing

All of these categories of horses contribute to the unwanted horse population.

## 3 equine groups that contribute to unwanted horse population

- 1) Over breeding of domestic horses
  - breeding trend is declining, however the unwanted horse population is stable at 100K-130K/year.
- 2) Over population of feral horses
  - these herds are unmanageable and breeding goes unchecked.
- 3) Over population of designated wild mustang herds
  - excess numbers on allocated ranges.
  - herd size doubles every 4 years.

## Top Factors to Unwanted Horse Issue

- 1) The Economy; owners could no longer afford their horse.
- 2) Closing of Processing Facilities.
- 3) High Cost of Euthanasia and Disposal.
- 4) Indiscriminate Breeding.
- 5) Old and injured horses.

## Wild Free Roaming Horses & Burro Act 1971

- An effort to protect, manage, and control wild horses and burros on public lands.
- It vested the BLM & the U.S. Forreast Service with responsibility for their management for a “thriving natural ecological balance.”
- BLM manages nearly 37,000 wild horses & burros roaming in 180 herd management areas (HMAs) comprising almost 32 million acres in 10 western states.



## BLM Horse Mgt Areas (HMAs)

- Largely unchecked by natural predators, wild horse populations often grow at rates of 18–25% per year. This unregulated growth can overtax vegetation and affect herd health as well as native wildlife populations.
- The primary means of dealing with excess animals has been periodic “gathers.”  
Most herds are gathered every 3–5 years.



# Excess Wild Horses

Excess animals:

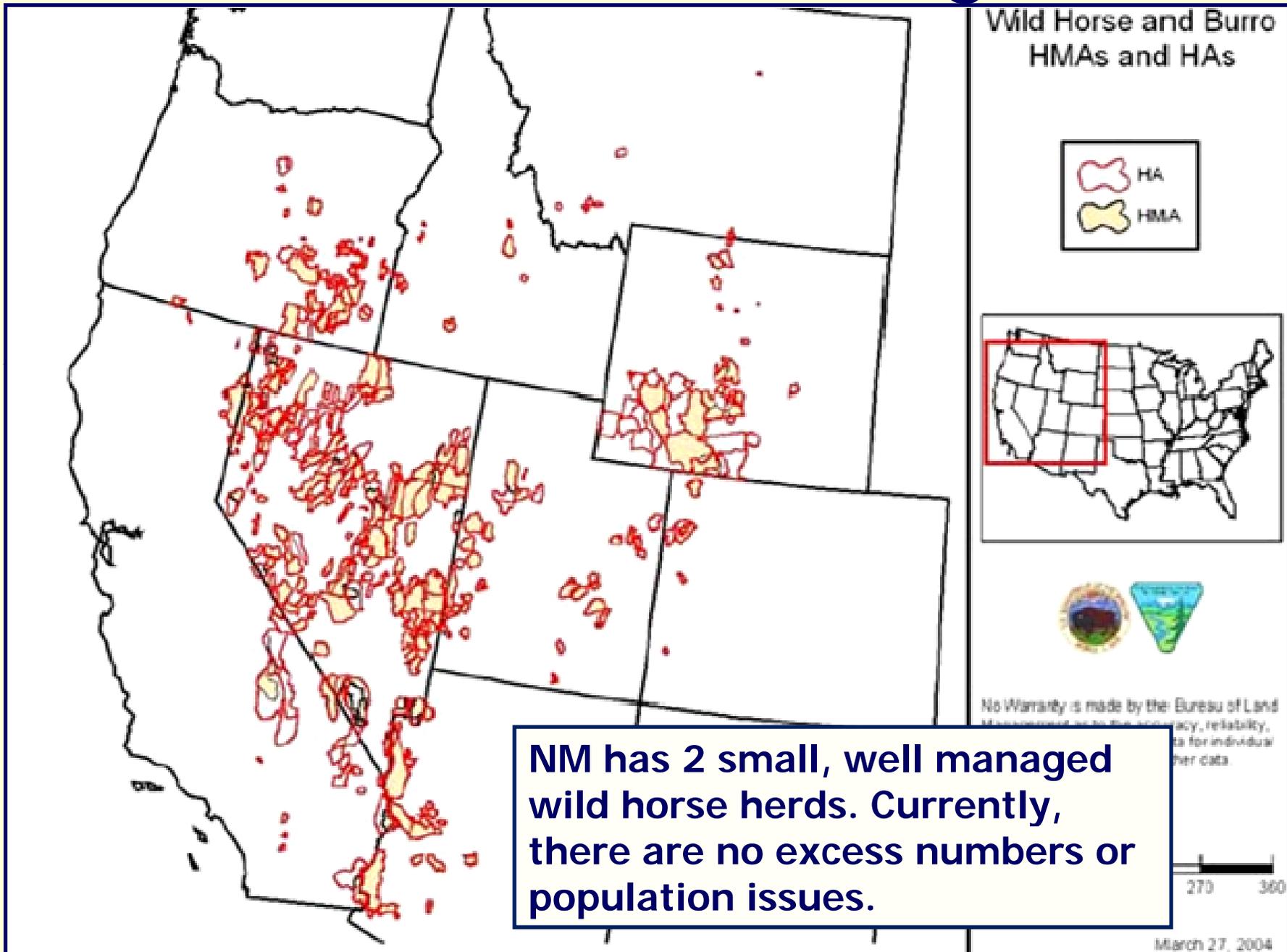
$\leq 10$  years of age  $\rightarrow$  public adoption;

$\geq 10$  years  $\rightarrow$  for sale to good homes.

Animals, not adopted or sold are maintained in long-term (pasture) holding facilities for the remainder of their natural lives.

Currently, BLM is warehousing in excess of 36,000 horses in holding facilities at a cost of \$37 million annually.

# Wild Horse and Burro Mgt Areas



**NM has 2 small, well managed wild horse herds. Currently, there are no excess numbers or population issues.**

# Montgomery Pass Herd

## *Natural Management*

- » If natural balance of predator & prey were restored, the wild horse population would also be controlled.
- » The Montgomery Pass HMA in California has not been rounded up in 27 years and the horse population has stayed consistent due to natural predators, mostly mountain lions.



# Feral Horses

Feral – an animal existing in a wild or untamed state; having returned to such state from domestication.

- Turned loose onto undesignated public lands or tribal lands to fend for themselves.
- Currently, 38,000 feral horses on U.S. public lands
  - » reduces grazing capacity of the land for livestock and wildlife.



# Unwanted Horses: Issues in NM

## Feral Horses

- Exist on private, tribal and government lands within the state.
- Acoma, Laguna, Navajo, Jicarilla and Mescalero are trying to resolve feral horse issues on their tribal lands.
- Exceeding the range capacity is detrimental to the well-being of domestic and wildlife species.

# Feral Horses: Population Control

- 1) Gathering
- 2) Selling
- 3) Vasectomizing stallions
- 4) Spaying mares
- 5) Progestins
- 6) PZP (SpayVac)
- 7) GonaCon
- 8) Natural predation



# Unwanted Horses: Issues in NM

## Unwanted horses

- Owners are unable to continue support for their horse(s) → abandonment, knowingly or unknowingly neglecting care and maintenance.
  - » the cost of euthanasia averages \$383 per horse.
- The well meaning & ill prepared attempt to rescue, rehab and care for the unwanted animals, which often results in regulatory agencies taking action.

# Impact on New Mexico

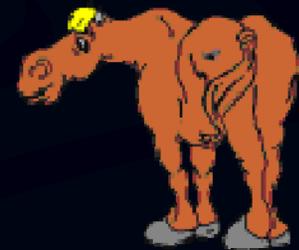
- 1) NMLB responded to 52 cases of equine cruelty & 10 cases of equine at large or on a highway from July, 2010 to February, 2011.
- 2) Bernalillo County Animal Control responded to 214 equine cruelty/neglect cases from June 1, 2010 to June 28, 2011.
- 3) NM has 9 equine rescues which house 243 horses.
- 4) An estimated 5,000 - 10,000 feral horses on tribal, private and public lands. These animals are have been abandoned, neglected and are unwanted.

# New Mexico Rescue Facilities

- 7 facilities - estimated capacity of 217 horses.
  - » Current inventory is 233 horses.
  - » 2 facilities are not actively accepting cases, but still support 10 previously rescued horses.
- Most are at capacity or over capacity.
- Each facility receives 3 - 50 phone calls/month.
- Many of the calls are from people who can no longer afford or no longer want their horse(s).
- Many facilities are struggling economically.

# Top priorities for NM Rescues

- **Money** - donations are drying up.
- **Feed** – annual cost of \$2300+ for one horse.
- **Volunteers** – many volunteers can no longer afford to drive to the rescue facilities.
- **Water** – 1 facilities is paying for water; 1 facility's well may be drying up.
- **More Space** - for additional horses.



# Unwanted Horses: Solutions

## New Mexico

- 1) Horse Industry will need to own the responsibility of those horses being produced from birth to death.
- 2) 9 NM Licensed Rescue & Retirement Facilities  
→ Education, rehabilitation and adoption
- 3) Humane groups and organizations  
→ Education, feed assistance, sterilization and euthanasia
- 4) Public/private funded equine facility to accept and process unwanted equines (**proposed**).

# Unwanted Horses: Solutions

## New Mexico

- Reduce population of unwanted and feral horses
  - » Spay/neuter clinics and birth control
- Fund an equine facility that would triage the unwanted/rescued cases. Triage includes:
  - » rescue, rehabilitation, adoption
  - » humane euthanasia
- **Humane slaughter** – provide domestic protein source for zoo animals and raptors.

The horse industry needs to own the problem and develop solutions!!!

→ Breeding

→ Racing

→ Show and Exhibition

→ Recreational Horse Owners

→ Casual Horse Owners

“Death is not abuse. Abuse is being starved to death, and having your guts ripped out by a coyote while you are still alive because you are too weak to get up.”

*Temple Grandin, PhD, Colorado State University*

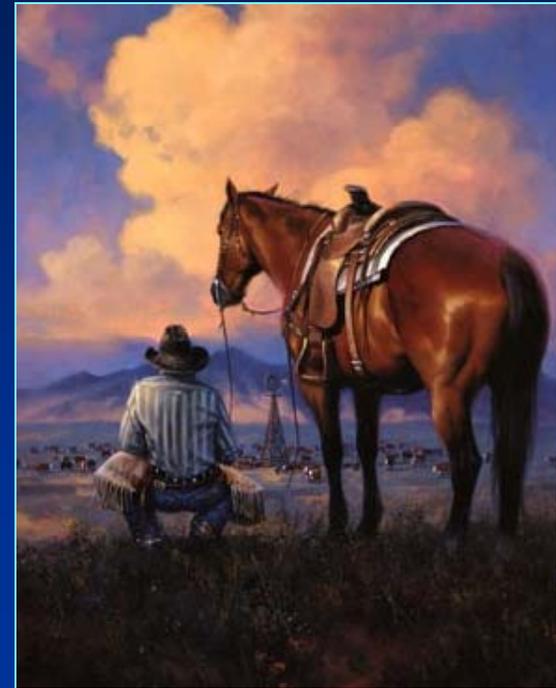


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