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Welfare Ranchers Call Mustang Advocates "Hysterical"

Chicago (EWA) – *The Progressive Rancher Magazine* has issued a response to the article in *Time Magazine* on the Madeleine Pickens proposed wild horse sanctuary. It is ironic that the response accuses equine advocates of "misrepresentations and distortions" of truth but is full of the authors' own misrepresentations and distorted truth.

The story, which was not available on line, was immediately distributed in a press release by Sue Wallis of *United Horsemen LLC.*, a staunch horse slaughter supporter and opponent of wild equine preservation.

Many western ranchers are licensed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to graze cattle on public lands for token fees well below the government's administrative costs, leading opponents of the practice to refer to them as "welfare ranchers". Since welfare ranchers on public lands are one of the driving forces behind the removals of America's wild horses and burros, it came as no surprise that such a magazine would distort the truth to further their agenda for more removals.

Such is the widespread sense of entitlement in this community that they exhibit outright anger at having to share public lands they feel should be solely for the use of their privately owned livestock that currently outnumber mustangs by at least 50 to 1.

The article quotes long-time equine advocate, [Willis Lamm](#), in an attempt to discredit all information from equine advocates. In response, Lamm commented "It's ironic that Sue Wallis, who along with her group that I have long considered to be included among those Hysteria Corps, laptop experts and self promoters, would be so careless as to publish my criticisms of their very actions in her press release."

Among other "myths", the article discounted as "hysteria" were claims by advocates that BLM horses were finding their way to slaughter. In reality, horses have been disappearing and have been documented to have been sold to slaughter as far back as 1994. The documentation can be viewed in this [report](#).

As if the historical evidence were not compelling enough, before the ink was even dry on the *Progressive Rancher* article, the BLM announced that a shipment of 47 BLM horses had been interdicted on its way to Mexico in the truck belonging to a well known slaughter buyer.

The incident, which is under investigation by the FBI, state agencies, and the US Attorney's Office, involves a [suspected slaughter ring](#).

Advocates have long called for the BLM to allow independent audits of the number of horses in their long term holding (LTH) facilities. With no system for tracking individual animals and no public access to LTH facilities, there is no way to know the fate of these horses or the number remaining in holding.

Unlike cattle, wild horses are a native American species. In fact, all equines in the world have their origins in North America. Evidence shows they got to Asia and Europe over the Bering land bridge.

It was long held that horses went extinct on the continent in the late Pleistocene about 11,000 years ago, but [recent fossil finds](#) and especially DNA samples from Clovis points have proven that horses survived in North America to at least 7,600 years ago, and now some researchers are beginning to question whether they ever went entirely extinct.

Of course, this doesn't stop those with designs upon their land from calling wild horses feral or a non-native species. Ignoring a rich library of scientific literature, the authors chose to quote a radical from the Audubon Society that is a self proclaimed expert on wild horses.

Advocates have often thought that since the European Union prohibits all wild equidae meat ([except zebra meat](#)), that renaming wild horses as non-native species or as feral is a way not only to degrade them, but to make them eligible for slaughter.

The 1971 Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act is explicit in the land granted [principally but not exclusive] and the intended management. The wild horses and burros are to be considered as an integral part of the natural system of the public lands and managed where presently found [in 1971]. The law did not give the BLM the right to remove over 20 million acres of land nor does it dictate that horses must be removed.

The opponents of wild horses completely dismiss a 1990 GAO report that clearly indicated that it was the millions of livestock, not wild horses that were overgrazing and ruining the ranges, particularly around the riparian areas. The article quotes the BLM statement that there are 50% less cattle on the public range than in 1940, but fails to mention that the size of the cattle has significantly increased.

Another frequently used argument is the cost of \$70M for wild horses but never is there a mention of the hundreds of millions it is costing taxpayers to subsidize the welfare ranchers grazing their millions of livestock on public lands.

Unfortunately, the article predominantly cites BLM data that cannot be rationalized, much less verified. As an example of the obscuration, the BLM claimed that there were between 32,000 and 34,000 wild horses on the range at the beginning of 2010. They removed 12,000 during the year, and then claimed there the population was 38,000. When the EWA asked about this strange accounting, we were provided with no plausible explanation.

Our wild horses and burros are just another example of how special interests are looting the wealth of our nation while creating smoke screens of indignation and feigned anger about the way government is treating them.

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The Equine Welfare Alliance is a dues free, umbrella organization with 186 member organizations and hundreds of individual members worldwide. The organization focuses its efforts on the welfare of all equines and the preservation of wild equids. www.equinewelfarealliance.org