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Horse Slaughter: Navajo Nation Government Rangers Storm Private Properties Searching & Seizing Horses in New Mexico

New Mexico – September 10, 2013 -The Navajo Nation (NN) Government is conducting a large-scale roundup of wild horses despite opposition from many tribal people. Local tribal members have reported government rangers coming onto their property and confiscating virtually every horse, even from within their stalls and pens. The sweeping roundups, if not stopped, will result in the distressed removal of countless horses and burros across the 17 million acre Navajo reservation which spans four states including New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Colorado.

Horse owners are said to have two days to claim or save their horses, but in many cases owners didn't learn about the roundup until the very moment when rangers were storming their property. The NN Department of Agriculture is taking the horses to holding facilities, then auction, and selling the unclaimed horses to kill buyers. Many are going straight to slaughter.

The actual number of horses residing on the reservation is uncertain, as reports are considerably varied. But the basis for receiving over \$1.3 million in appropriated funds for the horse and burro roundup from the U.S. government was hinged on drought conditions combined with a popular livestock grazing campaign which alleges an overpopulation of "feral" and "destructive" horses. Wild horses are labeled as "feral" by proponents of slaughter in denial of paleontological evidence showing that the horse evolved on the North American continent over 50,000,000 years ago.

When it comes to "livestock grazing" on public lands, permit holders are able to increase their stock by grazing farm animals such as cattle on America's open rangelands. But in the U.S. horses are not produced for food, and cattle ranchers see them as competitors for the grazing of free forage on public land which they could otherwise use for their livestock.

Horses are also labeled as "destructive" or "invasive species" by the livestock industry as a means to justify their removal. However, in other parts of the world such as the United Kingdom, where conservation grazing is practiced, wild horse herds are being successfully restored to the woodlands and pastures for their rejuvenation benefits to the lands. In the classic book, *Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West*, J. Boone Kauffman, Ph.D., Professor of Ecosystem Sciences in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Oregon State University, Corvallis, gives testimony to the far-reaching and devastating ecological consequences of government-subsidized livestock grazing through his scientifically supported work, "Lifeblood of the West"; "... livestock grazing has been the most widespread cause of ecological degradation of riparian/stream ecosystems. More riparian areas and stream miles are affected by livestock grazing than by any other type of land use."

New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez professes to align her position on the issue with the majority of citizens of New Mexico, where over 75% are opposed to horse slaughter. However, New Mexico horse advocates say that behind the scenes Governor Martinez' actions support the pending horse slaughter plant in her state. According to these sources, she has the authority to ban horse slaughter in New Mexico

and has not done so. Looking ahead, some believe that Martinez will be a contender for the Republican nomination for President of the United States in 2016.

On a national level, while USDA Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, publicly claims to be against horse slaughter, the USDA has been rallying tribal leaders to support the reopening of horse slaughter in the U.S. Wild for Life Foundation President, Katia Louise brings to light a startling new [report](#) which exposes the USDA's distribution of misinformation provided to the American tribal leaders including Navajo President Ben Shelly. This well-substantiated report entitled [In Truth Wild Horses on Native Land and Tongue](#), reveals evidence of meetings held by the USDA with tribal leaders for the purpose of getting them to distribute 'misinformation' to their congressional delegations about horse slaughter and the removal of America's wild horses..

The Navajo Elders have issued a [declaration](#) saying, "We strongly urge the Navajo Nation and U.S. Government, Bureau of Indian Affairs, DOI, USDA, to stop the desecration and destruction of the Diné Way of Life and Spiritual Foundation by recklessly promoting and supporting the roundup and mass execution of our relative, the horse."

As part of a larger pattern, two weeks ago a [strikingly similar roundup](#) to the one occurring on the Navajo reservation took place on the Fort McDermitt Paiute Shoshone Reservation in Nevada.

Critics view this latest roundup as part of a wider campaign endorsed by the Obama Administration. President Obama's appointment of Ken Salazar as Secretary of the Interior, which oversees the BLM, together with the U.S. Forest Service, has continued to conduct scores of roundups across 12 Western U.S. states resulting in the capture and eradication of countless wild horses. After Salazar stepped down in a wave of controversy in February of 2013, President Obama appointed Sally Jewel to the position — a veteran of the oil industry.

"While many had high hopes that Sally Jewell would direct a shift in policy, she has instead been silent on reversing agency roundup policies throughout the West," observes Katia Louise. "And many believe she has in fact intensified such efforts."

Ms. Louise states, "Contrary to the BLM's claims that wild horses are overpopulating, statistics show that vast numbers of wild equines are disappearing from the American West. In the 19th century, more than 2 million wild horses roamed the West, but independent analysis of the Bureau of Land Management's own data indicates that there may now be less than 15,000 wild horses roaming freely on public lands."

The Navajo Government has justified the eradication of its sacred [Navajo horses](#) by mimicking USDA and livestock industry assertions that the horses are supposedly "destroying the lands"; however, as stated by President Shelly during The 2012 Navajo State of the Nation, he admits that other livestock grazing, not horse grazing is to blame; "Our specialists have said sand dunes are growing and the land is being overgrazed. For example, we have nearly 170,000 sheep in Fort Defiance Agency, while our land can only support about 7,800 sheep." These facts are just the tip of the iceberg. The NN Department of Agriculture estimates that the Navajo range is overrun with domesticated livestock by more than 40 percent.

Past U.S. Government-mandated culls of horses and livestock have taken their toll on the Navajo people. Now, through U.S. Government funding, the NN Government is holding its own Government-mandated horse cull and doing so against the will and undeniable opposition of many of its people.

In an effort to save, protect and preserve wild and domestic equines, as opposed to the promotion of horse slaughter and widespread roundups throughout the American West, Wild for Life Foundation's President, Katia Louise is calling on members of the public who care about the horses to join in a united stance for the horses with Saving America's Horses by going to www.savingamericashorses.org and clicking on the join button, which will continue to raise awareness and provide ongoing education on this critical issue. Ms. Louise says, "Making your voice heard will ultimately bring this unjust, cruel and barbaric practice to an end."

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