

Wild Horse and Burro Program



Congress directed the Bureau of Land Management to protect and manage wild horses and burros (WH&B). The BLM faces numerous challenges in carrying out this mission.

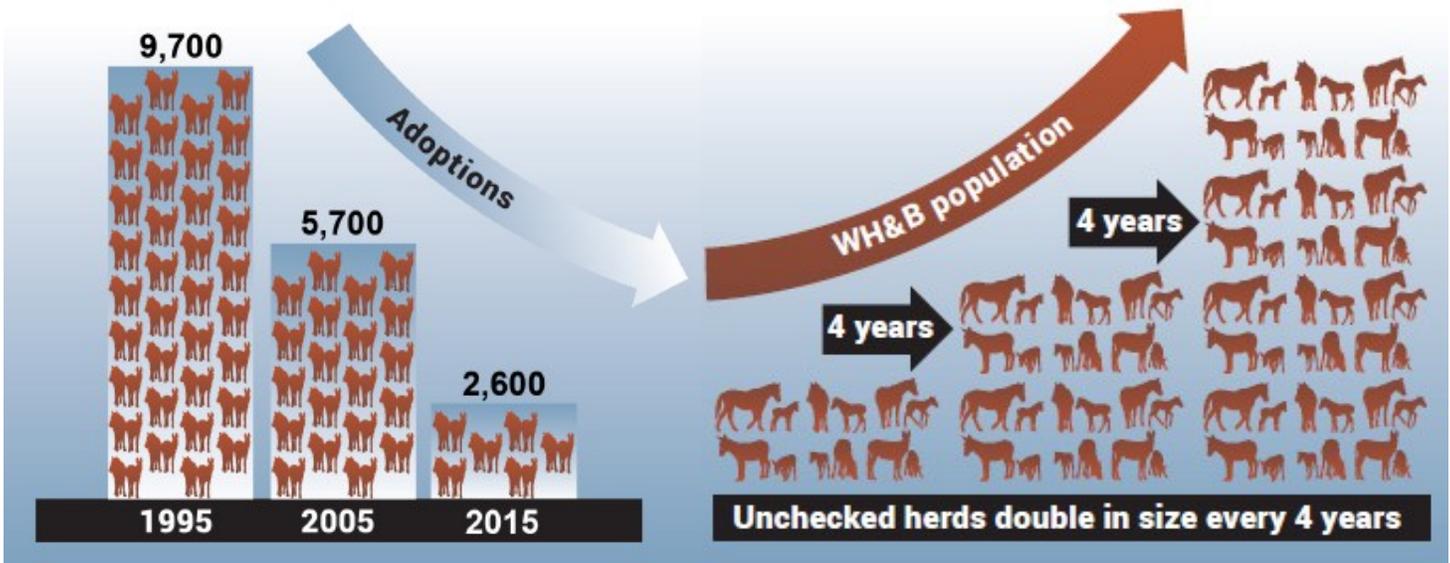
The Challenges: populations going up ...

Since receiving Federal protection in 1971, wild horse and burro populations on public lands have soared, far exceeding what is healthy for the land and the animals.



... adoptions going down ...

The BLM has placed more than 235,000 animals into good homes since 1971. However, as fewer Americans adopt wild horses and burros, population growth on public lands has out-paced adoptions.



... and high costs to care for unadopted animals.



The BLM spends two thirds of its Wild Horse and Burro Program budget to care for animals removed from the range. That's nearly **\$48,000 for one unadopted horse that remains in a corral over its lifetime.** Now, each year the BLM only removes as many animals from the range as can be adopted.

What's at stake: declining health of public lands and animals

As wild horse and burro populations rise, there are serious consequences for the animals and the land. Horses and burros starve, dehydrate and wander onto private property or highways. Land health and habitat for sage grouse and other wildlife is being compromised.



A wild horse mare and foal in very poor condition in Nevada because of lack of forage. In 2015, the BLM conducted an emergency gather of these horses.



A wild horse in a drying lake bed in Oregon. The BLM conducted an emergency gather in 2014 to remove imperiled horses from this herd.

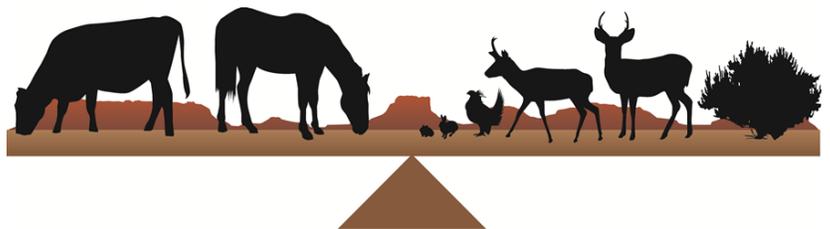
Addressing population growth

The National Academy of Sciences found that no highly effective fertility-control methods are currently available. In 2015 the BLM began investing \$11 million in research to find safe and effective methods to neuter and spay wild horses and develop longer-lasting contraceptive vaccines. At the same time, the BLM is increasing the use of existing short-lasting contraceptives to slow population growth where possible.



Achieving a balance on public lands

New research is expected to lead to better management tools. But even if these new tools were available today, it would take decades for populations to come into balance with what the land can support.



There are many divergent views on how wild horses and burros should be managed. Tough decisions are needed to put the Wild Horse and Burro Program on a sustainable path for the benefit of the animals, the land and U.S. taxpayers.

The BLM's goal is clear: maintain a thriving ecological balance that supports healthy horses on healthy rangelands.