

## BLM considering Mustang Euthanasia

**The federal agency says it can't afford to care for the number of wild horses in captivity.**

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Bureau of Land Management (BLM) officials announced on June 30 they are considering euthanizing wild horses to control herd populations.

According to BLM agency director Henri Bisson, the federal agency can't afford to care for the number of Mustangs currently in holding facilities, and he said fewer people are adopting wild horses.

The announcement marks the first time the BLM has publicly discussed the possibility of euthanasia for horses in holding facilities, according to an Associated Press report.

The agency is also considering whether to stop roundups of wild horses to save money, and it was recently announced that a large roundup scheduled for this fall had been canceled. If the BLM does halt roundups, the action will most likely be criticized by sheep and cattle ranchers who see the wild horses as competition for feed on the open range.

"Our goal is supposed to be about healthy horses on healthy ranges. But we are at the point we need to have a conversation with people about pragmatically what can we do given the financial constraints of our program to meet the goals we have," Bisson told the Associated Press.

Last year's BLM horse program budget was \$39 million, and the upcoming budget is expected to come in at \$37 million. There are an estimated 33,000 wild horses on the range in 10 Western states; about half are in Nevada. The BLM's target level of wild horses on the range is 27,000.

Approximately 30,000 wild horses are in holding facilities awaiting adoption or permanent housing solutions. BLM authorities will consider their alternatives at a meeting scheduled in September.