



## *Colorado Wool Growers Association*

PO Box 292 • Delta, CO 81416-0292 (970) 874-1433 • (970) 874-4170 fax  
 cwga@wool@aol.com • coloradosheep.org

Chairman Gail Schwartz  
 Senate Agriculture, Natural Resources and Energy Committee  
 Colorado State Capitol  
 Denver, Colorado

April 28, 2011

**Re: Resolution SJR 11 - 040 (Wild Horse & Burro Management)**

Dear Chairman Schwartz:

The Colorado Wool Growers Association represents Colorado sheep ranchers statewide, and our association takes an active interest in federal lands management because BLM and Forest Service actions have a significant impact on the livestock industry in the western United States. The Colorado Wool Growers Association strongly supports the passage of Resolution SJR 11-040 regarding the management of wild horses and burros in Colorado.

Radical wild horse “advocates” insist that this conflict is ranchers vs. wild horses, with the ranching community wanting feral horses removed so they can have more forage for livestock. This is a deliberate and calculated lie, perpetuated by the advocates and the media to garner support for their misguided cause of “saving” the wild horses. Since the enactment of the Free-Roaming and Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971, livestock grazing on BLM lands has been reduced by as much as 50%, while the feral horse population has steadily increased. The livestock industry supports Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) because it is necessary to maintain healthy rangeland conditions, not because the livestock industry is attempting to substitute sheep and cattle for horses on the range.

The Free-Roaming Wild Horse and Burro Act requires that, “Where the BLM Secretary determines that an overpopulation exists on a given area of the public lands and that action is necessary to remove excess animals, he shall immediately remove excess animals from the range so as to achieve appropriate management levels.” Our organization must question why the BLM is not held accountable for failing to follow its own regulations?

The failure to manage wild horses and burros by the BLM is one part of a much bigger issue. The bigger issue is that runaway environmentalism and animal rights groups are bankrupting our nation, and paralyzing federal and state governments, rendering them practically useless for implementing any common-sense management strategies. As a legislator, I believe it is your duty to make objective, rational decisions based on facts. Radical wild horse advocates, however, seldom give facts a second thought. Instead, they run emotionally charged campaigns documenting the “plight” of the mustang insisting that the mustangs must be allowed to freely roam on the open range. While it’s certainly a romantic image to entertain, it doesn’t

acknowledge the severe overgrazing and range degradation that can occur; or the malnutrition, lack of water, and starvation that happens on the open range if herds aren't managed. On one of the Cloud Foundation (wild horse advocacy websites) videos, a narrator sadly laments about the plight of the wild horse, telling the listener that when gathered, horses lose what they value the most.....their freedom. I would challenge that tear-jerking little melodrama by pointing out that a horse that is starving to death or dying from lack of water on the open range is not lamenting the loss of its freedom, but is wholly consumed by the struggle to stay alive in search of non-existent forage and water. Despite what the horse advocates tell you, there is a fate worse than being gathered and put in a holding facility; it's starving to death on the open range.

There are now several generations of Americans that have no direct ties to agriculture, the livestock industry, or living off the land. Many Americans' experience with animals comes from watching Bambi and the Lion King. The combination of these two factors have culminated into the perfect storm, as a generation of advocates has emerged armed not with facts, but with an emotionally-charged agenda they exploit through the social media. The lens in which they view the world is distorted by their life experience grounded in animated films, and Hollywood happy endings.

The BLM has become paralyzed as it attempts to continually meet the needs of so-called wild horse advocates. However, the BLM's true obligation is to manage for the viability of the range, and a multitude of other uses including managed numbers wild horses and domestic livestock grazing.

We strongly urge you to dismiss the rose-colored scenarios offered up by wild horse advocates that don't actually offer solutions to existing and future problems.

Please vote YES for Resolution SJR 11-040.

Respectfully,

*Bonnie Brown*, Executive Director  
Colorado Wool Growers Association