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BLM Headquarters

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The BLM announces additional protective steps for wild horse and burro adoptions

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. – The Bureau of Land Management today announced additional steps it will take to secure the health and safety of adopted wild horses and burros through the Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Incentive Program.

“We are committed to the health and safety of adopted wild horses and burros,” said **BLM Deputy Director for Programs Nada Wolff Culver**. “While the vast majority of adopters already adhere to our requirements to provide a good and caring home, the BLM is now taking additional steps to secure the health and safety of adopted animals. We will begin to make additional compliance visits post-adoption, bring more scrutiny to potential adopters, and increase warnings to sale barns about the risks of illegally selling wild horses and burros, among other steps.”

Before adopting a wild horse or burro, an individual must certify, under penalty of prosecution, that the individual will not knowingly sell or transfer the animal for slaughter or for processing into commercial products. To ensure adopted animals go to good homes, the BLM limits adopters to assuming title to a maximum of four animals within a 12-month period and prohibits the transfer of title for at least 12 months from the adoption date. Furthermore, the BLM conducts compliance inspections on animals while in private care prior to title transfer.

The BLM plans to take the following actions to provide further oversight and protection of adopted wild horses and burros:

- Continue to work with partners and other stakeholders to evaluate potential improvements to the Adoption Incentive Program, consistent with relevant laws and regulations.
- Ensure all adoption applications and agreements clearly and consistently state that the adopter must provide humane care and require the adopter to certify that they will not knowingly sell or transfer ownership of an adopted animal to any person or organization that intends to resell, trade or give away the animals for slaughter or processing into commercial products.
- Improve the screening of adoption applicants to better ensure that ineligible individuals are identified and excluded from participating in the adoption program, consistent with relevant laws and regulations.
- Conduct an inspection of wild horses and burros adopted through the Adoption Incentive Program within six months of adoption date, rather than twelve months.

- Have a veterinarian certify all title applications for wild horses and burros adopted through the Adoption Incentive Program in order to receive the incentive payment.
- Increase posting of [warning notices](#) at livestock sale facilities, highlighting criminal penalties for illegally selling un-titled wild horses and burros.
- Continue to refer cases to relevant U.S. Attorneys for potential violations under 18 USC 1001 for making false or misleading statements on adoption and title applications and agreements.
- Evaluate changes to federal regulations that strengthen protections for adopted wild horses and burros.

[Find additional details on the planned changes to the Adoption Incentive Program.](#)

The Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Program is a vital component of the BLM's mission to manage and protect wild horses and burros as required by the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (Act) and other relevant laws and regulations. Since passage of the Act, the BLM has regularly gathered excess wild horses and burros from public lands to manage herd growth and address overpopulation. [Current estimates](#) suggest there are more than three times the number of wild horses and burros on public lands than is ecologically sustainable. Many of the oversized herds are negatively impacting native plant communities, wildlife, and important ecosystem functions.

The Adoption Incentive Program is a component of the existing Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Program that has increased the number of animals placed into private care. To date, the Adoption Incentive Program has helped place more than 8,250 wild horses and burros into adoptive homes.

There are thousands of adoption success stories between a wild horse or burro and an adopter, ranging from beloved backyard companions to champion performance partnerships. Find some of their stories on the BLM's [Tales from the Trails blog](#).

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This year, we invite everyone to reimagine your public lands as we celebrate 75 years of the BLM's stewardship and service to the American people. The BLM manages approximately 245 million acres of public land located primarily in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The agency's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.