

Alberta Government Gearing Up to Cull Wild Horses New Report Exposes Lack of Science or Evidence to Support a Cull

Albertans who value their wild horse history and understand the animals' value in the ecosystem will be outraged to learn that the Alberta Government is planning to cull wild horses this winter after a decade long reprieve.

Zoocheck has just released a new, peer-reviewed, report by Wayne McCrory, a respected biologist and wildlife researcher. McCrory's latest report follows up on a professional review of Alberta wild-horse management he wrote in 2015 which exposed the lack of evidence or science to support culling and after which the government stopped their highly controversial cull.

In the subsequent years, a committee was reestablished by the Province to review the wild horse management program, however the Province's Chief Scientist severely restricted the information available to the committee, by excluding the government's own range health data, as well as more than 95% of relevant scientific papers and ignoring traditional First Nations knowledge that should have informed the process.

According to McCrory's 2024 report, the mistakes of 2015 are being made yet again, and the valuable history and ongoing role of wild horses in maintaining the ecosystems in which they live were completely ignored. "Wild Horses are wrongfully attributed with a percentage of range damage despite the government's own range health reports showing that the damage is caused primarily by industry and recreational activities harming the fescue grasslands". McCrory states "Targeting the Foothills wild horses with intervention population control measures, is unwarranted and will do little, if anything, to protect and restore rangeland health since there is no management planned for the industries which are the major source of range damage."

Zoocheck's Campaigns Director, Julie Woodyer adds "The government's attempt to greenwash the cull with "adoption" programs fails to address the harm caused by separating and disrupting horse families and ultimately could lead to the demise of Alberta's wild horses, especially since horse populations are already significantly impacted by high natural mortality rates." "Rather than persecuting and vilifying the wild horses, the Alberta government should be promoting their worth and protecting their populations as has been done in other jurisdictions."

Wayne McCrory's report also highlights another management method, involving the use of the fertility-control vaccine PZP, that fails to take into account the natural fluctuation of wild horse populations, from year to year, caused by predation by wolves, mountain lions and black bears, along with starvation in extreme winters and drought-stricken summers—and capture and removal of wild horses by private interests.

Alberta's wild-horse population is already down to a small fraction of what it was historically and while other countries are reintroducing wild horses to strengthen ecosystem health, the Alberta government is moving backwards by scapegoating wild horses for damage that they know is caused by damaging human activities.

Zoocheck urges every Albertan who cares about wild horses to write to Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and their own MLA urging them to stop the Alberta government's needless and unscientific scapegoating of wild horses for damage they haven't caused and to provide them with the legal protections that most Albertan's believe they should have.

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Link to report: <https://www.zoocheck.com/2024-science-review-horses-alberta/>