

National Tribal Horse Coalition

Timeline: The Feral Horse Crisis & NTHC Formation



Pre-2006 – 2007

Federal Policy Shift

Pre-2006: Tribes managed populations by culling and taking excess horses to processing plants.

2006: FY2006 Appropriations Act prohibited federal funding for USDA ante-mortem inspections.

2007: US processing facilities closed. Processing wasn't illegal, but lacked inspection funding.

Impact & Crisis

Ecological Consequences

Market Collapse: Drastically reduced viable market, leaving horses with virtually no value.

Abandonment: Lack of value led to widespread horse abandonment on reservations.

Ecosystem Damage: Unmanaged overpopulation severely degraded natural ecosystems.

2008 – 2009

Coalition Response

Nov 18, 2008: Northwest Tribes formed the Northwest Tribal Horse Coalition.

Founding Tribes: Yakama Nation, Warm Springs, Shoshone-Bannock, Colville, and Umatilla.

March 2009: Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) formally established NTHC as a subcommittee.

MISSION & VISION

PURPOSE OF NTHC

SOVEREIGNTY & MANAGEMENT

Natural Resources Administration

Supporting Tribal Nations in protecting Sovereign Rights to manage natural resources on Tribal Homelands.

LEGAL ADVOCACY

Animal Welfare & Protection

Advocating for National and Tribal laws for protection and humane treatment of livestock on tribal lands.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Foods & Traditional Medicines

Protecting and enhancing culturally significant foods and traditional medicines for future generations.

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Unified Tribal Voice

Serving as a strong, unified Tribal Voice that will be heard clearly across the Nation.



ADVOCACY & ACTION

THE WORK BEGINS: LEGISLATIVE & POLICY EFFORTS

2009 INITIATIVES

Tribal Resolutions & DC Delegation

Resolutions Passed: Secured key support through ATNI Resolution #09-38 and NCAI Resolution #NGF-09-017.

Congressional Outreach: NTHC members traveled to Washington D.C. to directly inform leaders on the ground reality.

Senate Action: The U.S. Senate requested a formal GAO study on overall horse welfare following facility closures.

AUGUST 11, 2010

GAO Testimony & Evidence

Tribal Voice Heard: NTHC member tribes formally testified before the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

Documenting Impact: Provided crucial primary data and testimonies detailing ecological degradation and animal welfare risks on reservation lands.

JUNE 2011

GAO Findings Issued (GAO-11-228)

Unintended Consequences: The GAO report acknowledged significant negative impacts of the inspection defunding.

"Clearly, the cessation of domestic slaughter has had unintended consequences, most importantly, perhaps, the decline in horse welfare in the United States."

Tribal Impact Confirmed: Formally validated the ongoing crisis affecting tribal lands and sovereignty.

LEGISLATIVE REVERSAL & CHALLENGES

POLICY SHIFTS: THE 2011–2013 LEGISLATIVE STRUGGLE

NOVEMBER 18, 2011

FY 2012 Appropriations Act

Federal Policy Lifted: President Obama signed the FY 2012 Appropriations Act into law.

Inspection Funds Restored: The legislation allowed federal funds to once again be utilized for USDA Horse Meat Inspection.

Policy Opportunity: Reopened potential pathways for regulated processing operations.

2012 INITIATIVES

USDA Licensing & Legal Blocks

Facility Licensing: The USDA initiated the formal process to license processing facilities using federally funded inspectors.

Legal Opposition: Before facilities could reopen, HSUS intervened with legal actions.

Process Halted: Lawsuits directly blocked USDA's authorization framework for new facilities.

2013 – 2014

Defunding & Consultation Deficit

Funding Eliminated: President Obama's proposed 2014 Budget Act stripped inspection funds; approved by Congress.

Procedural Omission: Action taken entirely without formal Tribal Consultation.

Bypassed Exec. Order 13175 mandate requiring regular, meaningful consultation with Tribal Officials on federal policies.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS & STRATEGY

TRIBAL EXEMPTION: USDA BUDGET RESTRICTIONS

ALTERNATIVE LEGISLATIVE APPROACH

Proposed "Rider" Language Amendment

Zach Ducheneaux (IAC Program Director) presented a key legislative strategy during meetings with the BIA to bypass federal restrictions.

Proposed Action: Insert "except on Tribal land" into the Appropriations bill rider language banning USDA horsemeat inspection funding.

Strategic Impact: Will alleviate documented suffering, restore a healthy horse economy, and protect Tribal traditions and treaty rights.

Humane Option: Provides regulated processing to improve conditions for horses, natural resources, and tribal economies.

ADVANCEMENT & ADVOCACY MEDIA

BIA Support & Tribal Perspective

BIA Director Support: Michael Black encouraged Tribes to take this proposal to Tribal Councils, ATNI, and NCAI for consideration.

Documentary Screening: Meetings included "Horses in Crisis", highlighting overpopulation effects featuring Boyd M. Spratling, D.V.M.

Media Reference & Next Steps

Screening URL: [link removed]

Emphasis placed on the vital importance of creating a future documentary specifically from a Tribal perspective.

2015 NTHC PROPOSAL: TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY DOCUMENTARY

DOCUMENTARY VISION

Public Opinion & Tribal Reality

Core Objective: Change public opinion on unnecessary federal restrictions imposed on Tribal Nations.

Case Study Focus: Use horse overpopulation as a primary example of how U.S. policy repeatedly disregards Tribal concerns.

Overcoming Majority Fervor: Counter the emotional fervor of majority special interest groups (e.g., equine slaughter ban advocates) that override Tribal voices in popular forums.

LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK

2016 Budget & Opposition

Federal Rider Status: Outlook favors excluding the restrictive "rider" language in the 2016 Budget—a positive shift, though not yet finalized.

Practical Challenges: Policy lifts alone may not re-open processing facilities due to ongoing legal and political hurdles.

Ongoing Misguided Efforts: Opposing groups (HSUS) continue actions that directly result in increased horse starvation, suffering, and abandonment on Tribal lands.

2018 MILESTONE

BIA Funding & Project Scope

Funding Announcement: The BIA formally announced $60,000 in funding for the Tribal Documentary project: Horses on Tribal Lands.

Project Scope: Designed to capture the authentic, daily realities and lived experiences across all Northwest Tribes.

Secured $60,000 BIA grant to document Northwest Tribal perspectives and combat external policy interference.

ADVOCACY & CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

COALITION LETTERS: OPPOSING SAFE ACT LEGISLATION

MAY 26, 2022

H.R. 3355 Opposition Letter

From: George Meninick, Chairman (NTHC)

To: House Energy & Commerce Committee

Core Point: Opposes H.R. 3355 (SAFE Act of 2021). Banning horse-meat exports worsens overpopulation on tribal lands.

Impact: Severe damage to vegetation, wildlife habitat, soil, and streams across reservations.

Key Argument: Export is the last practical management option; contraception is unworkable for vast remote herds.

SAFE Act Reference: H.R. 3355 (117th Congress)

JUNE 15, 2023

House Native American Caucus

From: NTHC Leadership (Northern Arapaho, Yakama, Blackfeet)

To: Co-Chairs Cole & Davids, Caucus Members

Core Point: Urges Caucus to reject H.R. 3475 inclusion in the Farm Bill.

Ground Reality: Navajo (>70k), Yakama (>15k), and Wind River (>8k) face massive ecological strain.

Sovereignty: Criminalizing transport infringes on tribal land management authority.

Key Mandate: Preserve tribal authority against unworkable federal bans.

JULY 10, 2024

House Agriculture Committee

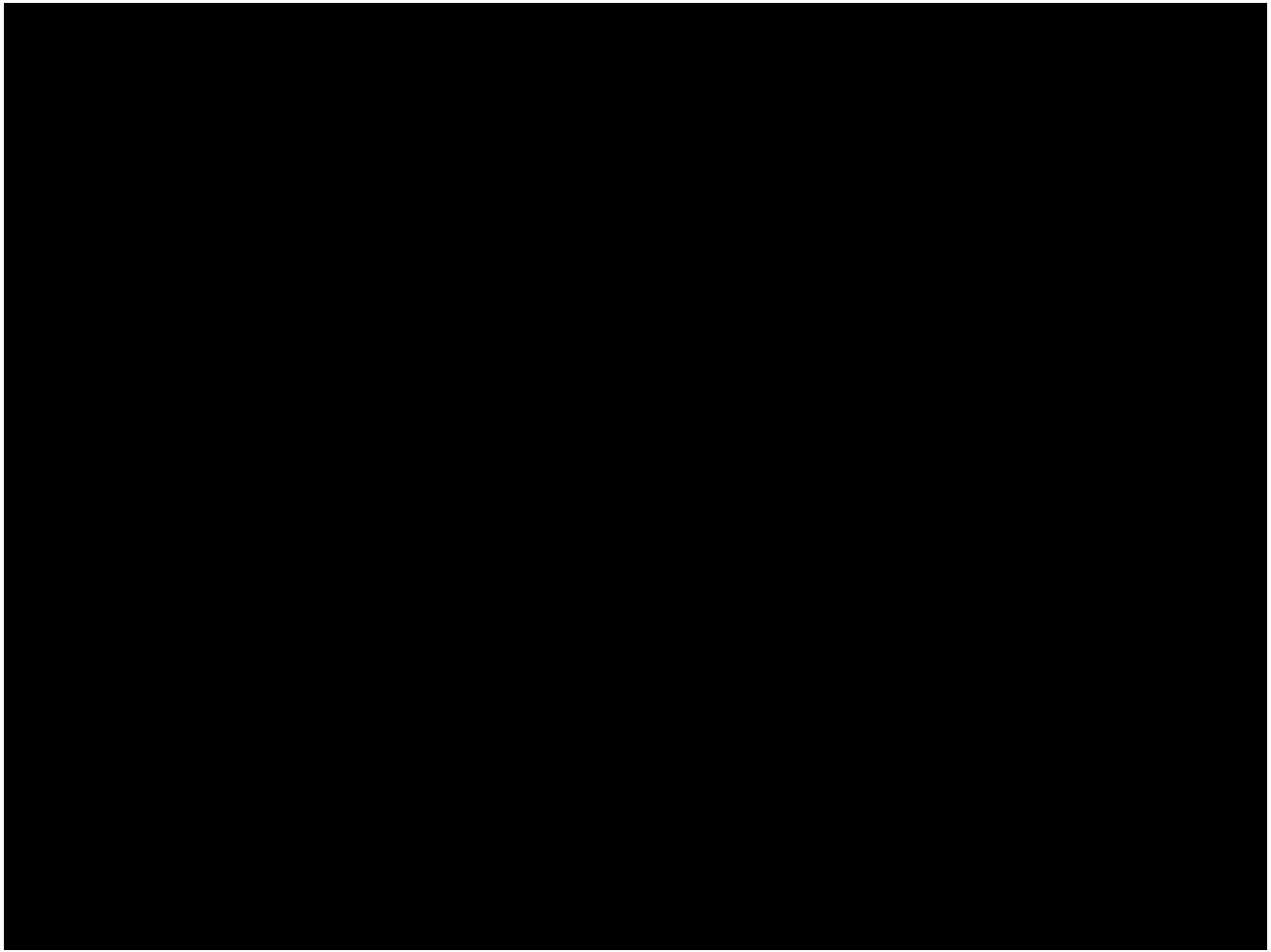
From: NTHC Leadership (Crazythunder, Wallahee, Ironpipe)

To: Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Scott & Committee

Core Point: Thanked Committee for excluding SAFE Act (H.R. 3475) language from the Farm Bill.

Reaffirmed: Adoption & fertility programs are insufficient; transport access preserves sovereign management.

Legislative Outcome: SAFE Act successfully excluded from Farm Bill draft.



ADVOCACY & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? HORSE HEALTH & WELFARE

FORAGE & CONSUMPTION

1.5 Animal Units A Day

Daily Intake: How much does a horse eat in a day? A horse requires approximately 1.5 Animal Units daily to maintain health.

What is an AU? An Animal Unit is the standard measure of forage an animal consumes daily to sustain healthy body weight.

Essential for evaluating managed and unmanaged herd carrying capacities.

LAND & RANGE CAPACITY

Measuring AUMs

AUM Definition: How is an AUM measured? Animal Unit Months calculate total available forage across a targeted grazing area.

Ecological Strain: Overpopulated unmanaged herds exceed available AUMs, causing severe pasture degradation and forage depletion.

Accurate AUM measurement is critical for sustainable range management.

HYDRATION & BASIC NEEDS

Water & Essential Resources

Water Requirements: A horse needs 5–10 gallons of water daily depending on weather conditions.

Heat Impact: Horses consume significantly higher volumes of water in extreme heat.

Clean Air: Horses also require continuous access to clean air—a fundamental resource.

Ensuring adequate water access is a major challenge in arid tribal management zones.

ADVOCACY & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

LAND & RANGE CAPACITY: ANIMAL UNIT MONTH (AUM) STANDARDS

Sacred Responsibility & Wildlife Conservation

"The Creator gave us responsibility. The AUM system was designed to make sure other animals had something to eat as well. In our area, they save 30% of the forage for the wildlife."

EQUINE

1.50 AUMs

1 Horse

Highest individual forage consumption rate among managed livestock.

BOVINE - MATURE & BISON

1.20 AUMs

1 Bull or 1 Buffalo

Standard baseline for large mature livestock and native bison range impact.

BOVINE - PAIR

1.00 AUM

1 Cow & Calf

Standard Animal Unit (AU) base measurement for forage calculation.

BOVINE - YOUNG

0.66 AUMs

1 Yearling / Cow

Calculated intake for growing young stock prior to full maturity.

SMALL RUMINANTS

0.20 AUMs

1 Sheep / Goat

Requires 5 sheep or goats to equal the baseline forage consumption of 1 AUM.

ECOLOGICAL PRESERVATION

30.0%

Saved for Wildlife

Reserved carrying capacity ensures native species thrive alongside managed livestock.

ADVOCACY & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

CALCULATING HAY NEEDS FOR A HORSE

ASSUMPTIONS

Baseline Profile

Horse Profile: 1,000 lb healthy, adult horse.

Daily Consumption: 2.5% of body weight each day.

Dietary Basis: Primarily a hay diet with no pasture access or grain concentrated in the ration.

Establishes the standard baseline for evaluating total annual forage requirements.

CALCULATIONS & BALES

9,125 lbs / Year

Daily Hay Intake: 1,000 lbs × 0.025 = 25 lbs / day.

Annual Requirement: 25 lbs × 365 days = 9,125 lbs / year.

Small Bales (50 lb): Requires 183 bales/year (~4.56 tons).

Estimated Annual Cost: **$1,140 - $1,368** Based on $250 - $300 / ton standard pricing.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Management Advice

- Waste Buffer: Add at least 10% more to account for feeding & storage waste.
- Weather & Reserve: Plan for 30+ days extra for acclimation and severe weather issues.
- Pasture Credit: Subtract active days on pasture from total hay needs.
- Key Variables: Body weight, activity level, health status, and total diet impact final needs.

ECONOMIC IMPACT: UNMANAGED HERD AUM COSTS

HERD & CONSUMPTION BASELINE

Range Unit Parameters

Unmanaged Horses: 5,000 head running at large.

Equine Rate: 1.50 AUMs per horse per month.

BIA Rental Rate: $27.50 standard monthly rate per AUM.

Establishes the monthly forage demand and financial valuation baseline.

MONTHLY FORAGE CALCULATIONS

7,500 AUMs / Mo.

Monthly Volume: 1.5 AUMs × 5,000 head = 7,500 AUMs / month.

Monthly Financial Impact: $27.50 × 7,500 AUMs = $206,250 / month.

Represents monthly lost forage revenue across affected grazing lands.

ANNUAL ECONOMIC LOSS

$2,475,000 / Year

Annual Total: $206,250 / month × 12 months = $2,475,000 per year.

Impacted Stakeholders: This compounding figure directly costs landowners, Tribes, and Allottees.

Demonstrates the vital necessity for active range management and control.