



United States Senate

August 16, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

I am writing to request additional information about the reforms announced on July 26, 2021 to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Adoption Incentive Program. It is critical for your Department to protect wild horses and burros from individuals who are reportedly selling their horses to auctions frequented by slaughter buyers after collecting up to \$1,000 through BLM's Adoption Incentive Program, and I would like to learn more about how you plan to implement these reforms.

I was pleased to learn that as part of these reforms BLM has committed to ensuring consistent adoption agreements; improving applicant screening; increasing the frequency of compliance inspections; and referring relevant cases to U.S. Attorneys, among other efforts. However, I believe more must be done in light of the disturbing allegations that some adopters have mistreated or illegally sold wild horses and burros, and respectfully urge BLM to conduct a full investigation of the matter and prevent such adopters from adopting again. Additionally, I urge BLM to re-evaluate its cash incentive for the adoption of untrained wild horses and consider prioritizing such federal payments to subsidize training for adopted wild horses to increase the likelihood that they stay in loving homes instead of ending up at slaughter.

As you work to implement these needed reforms and explore additional ways to protect wild horses and burros, I respectfully request that you provide responses to the questions in the attachment within 60 days. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dianne Feinstein".

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

DF/hm



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Attachment: Questions on reforms to the Adoption Incentive Program

1. Has the BLM interviewed the adopters quoted or mentioned in the attached *New York Times* article to verify whether they committed illegal acts?
2. How many adopters have violated the *Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act*, relevant regulations, or the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program adoption/sale applications and agreements?
3. Does the BLM track how many wild horses and burros—both those titled or untitled—are sold for slaughter? If so, how many wild horses and burros—both titled and untitled—have been sold and transported for slaughter?
4. BLM states that “if the animal is titled, BLM will provide a letter to the requestor confirming its status.” Does the BLM intend to take any additional actions to protect titled wild horses and burros from being sold for slaughter once identified at livestock sale facilities?
5. BLM states that they will 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.” How many cases has BLM historically referred to law enforcement and what was the outcome for each case?
 - a) Does the BLM intend to increase their rate of referrals to U.S. Attorneys?
6. BLM states that they plan to conduct an inspection of wild horses and burros adopted through the Adoption Incentive Program within six months of adoption date, rather than twelve months. Are these inspections in person or virtual?