

39 Wild Horses Died At Brutal Nevada Helicopter Roundup

From [Lex Talamo, LadyFreethinker.org](#)

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We looked at the [mounting death tolls in those early days](#), when horses were being driven relentlessly despite high winds and in excessive heat, and predicted that at least 31 wild horses would die before the roundup's end.



(Scott Henderson/LFT Investigation)

Another gruesome and deadly wild horse roundup is now part of American history — with 39 formerly free-roaming horses now dead following this year's gather by the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Nevada's Antelope Complex.

The BLM announced in early July that contractors would be pushing terrified horses toward a trap site using helicopters — a brutal method that resulted in [dozens](#) of broken necks, snapped legs, fatal injuries, and family separations in the last year alone.

Fearing more suffering, Lady Freethinker [sent an observer](#) to the Antelope Complex at the roundup's start. By day 3, we documented atrocity, including of a Palomino stallion who broke his leg as he jumped over the holding corral and then ran for an hour before wranglers shot and killed him.

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We launched a [week of action](#) for the wild horses, [filed in the court system](#) to help stop the roundup, and sent [letters](#) and our [petition](#) — now signed by more than 63,000 Americans — so key officials to try to get them to listen to reason and stop the fatalities. Former *Baywatch* [Alexandra Paul also joined LFT to speak up](#) for the wild horses.

But a judge allowed the roundup to continue, and 39 wild horses are now dead — including five wild horses who broke their necks, two who broke their legs, and at least eight who were chased while at least partially blind. The deaths also included 12 foals killed for reported colic, club feet, hernia, and leg deformities, according to [daily gather reports](#).



(Scott Henderson/LFT Investigation)

More than 3,000 other wild horses — including 232 foals — have lost their freedom, with the BLM’s gather reports noting the agency shipped the animals to the Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center and the Indian Lakes Off Range Corrals, where they will now join the thousands of wild horses kept at taxpayer expense in holding nationwide.

While deaths, injuries, family separations, horses languishing in limbo at government facilities, and driving horses over rough terrain is not “news” for the BLM, the specific circumstances of this year’s Antelope Complex highlight four main reasons why helicopter-assisted roundups — and the approved conditions in which they are conducted — are inherently inhumane and shouldn’t be allowed to continue.

Reports from the gather, which lasted from July 9 through Aug. 20, noted that horses were pursued on days when winds reached up to 20 mph and temperatures reached at least 95 degrees.

Conditions were so extreme that operations had to be suspended on at least three days, with [log notes reading](#) “Gather stopped at 1 p.m. due to the temperatures,” “Gather operations stopped at 8:30 am. due to wind,” and “No gather operations performed today due to high winds impacting aerial resources.”

The BLM [frequently states](#) that roundups are needed due to reported limited forage and environmental degradation in the areas (despite [continued livestock grazing](#)) — but most of the wild horses gathered in the North complex showed healthy weights, according to the daily gather reports.

BLM officials reported body score conditions of 2 — or “very thin” — on only two days of the nearly 2-month gather, and kill logs report only one horse — of the 3,078 gathered — who was shot to death for a reported low body score.



(Scott Henderson/Lady Freethinker Investigation)

The Palomino stallion who broke his leg jumping out of the corral, whose heartbreaking story has mobilized advocates everywhere to call for an end to cruel helicopter-roundups, was not alone in jumping out of the temporary corrals — with a stallion and mare marked as “released” after they risked serious injury to reclaim their freedom by jumping out of their holding cell.



(Scott Henderson/LFT Investigation)

The BLM did not respond to Lady Freethinker’s media inquiries about what, if anything, would be done to prevent avoidable injuries like the Palomino’s in the future. The BLM did not, in fact, respond to any of our questions despite numerous outreach efforts.

Lady Freethinker, along with many leading wild horse advocacy and welfare groups, has long advocated for the use of humane fertility vaccines, via darting, as a more compassionate alternative to helicopter-assisted roundups.

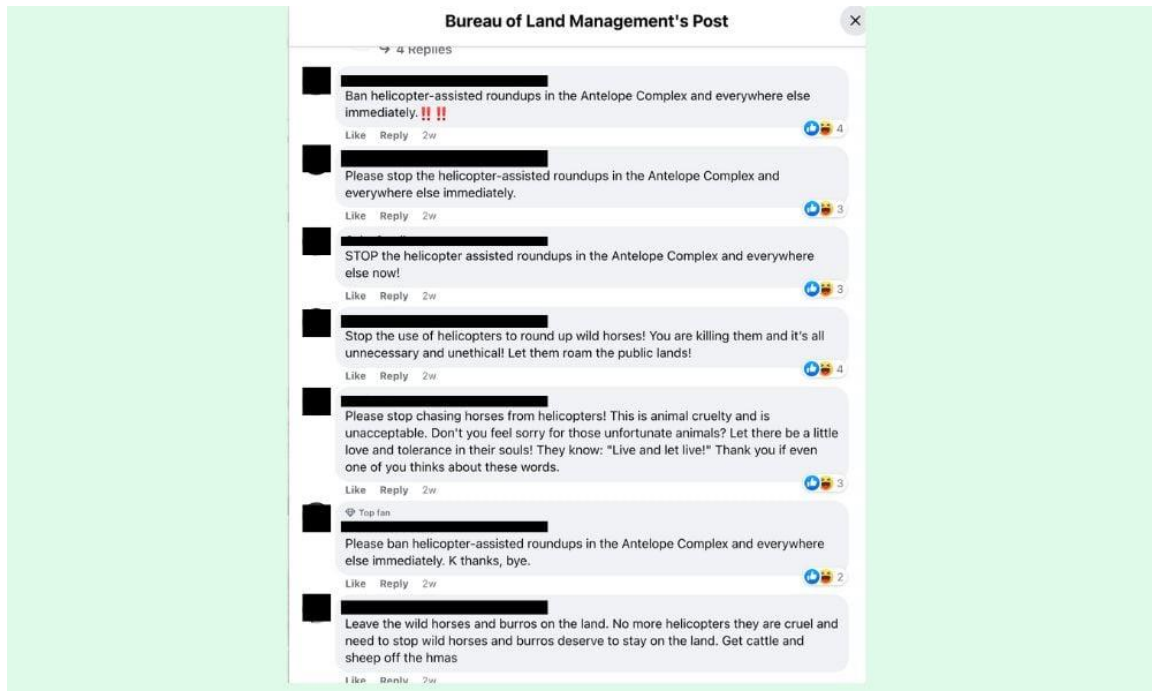
The operation in the South half of the Antelope Complex was supposed to treat at least 15 mares with a fertility vaccine — but daily gather reports show no mares were treated, with the BLM instead capturing and shipping the mares to holding facilities.



(Scott Henderson/Lady Freethinker Investigation)

Lady Freethinker thanks all of our supporters who spoke up for wild horses during our week of action. We know that our message was not lost on you, as you helped clearly make the case for compassion in the comments you respectfully left — via phone call, social media, and email — to BLM representatives, including supporters who wrote the following:

- “Not only are these wild horses terrified, they are breaking their limbs and necks due to fear. So inhumane!” — Shann L.
- “Please stop chasing horses from helicopters! This is animal cruelty and unacceptable!” — Judit K.
- “You preach wildlife care and protection but fail to acknowledge that on Aug. 1, 2023, you executed wild horse roundups in Nevada, where wild horses are chased for hours and are often injured, killed, or separated from their families in the process. Please, I urge you to stop this horrific and inhumane action to our sacred wildlife.” — Robin F.



From LFT's Week of Action (Bureau of Land Management via Facebook; redacted for privacy)

We will continue to advocate for an end to these cruel roundups and for wild horses to live their lives free from fear, pain, and suffering.

In the meantime, we wanted to take a moment to honor the lives lost in the cruel and senseless Antelope Complex 2023 roundup. In Memoriam of the following wild horses killed:

- a bay foal killed for a “pre-existing” fractured leg
- a bay foal killed for lameness and infection
- a sorrel foal killed reportedly for dehydration and diarrhea
- a sorrel foal killed in holding for colic
- a female foal killed for colic
- a sorrel foal killed for a club foot
- a sorrel foal killed for an umbilical hernia
- a 3-month-old filly killed for a leg deformity
- a 3-month-old colt killed for a leg deformity
- a 4-month-old bay colt killed for a physical deformity
- a 1-year-old sorrel male killed for a “pre-existing” shoulder fracture
- a 1-year-old sorrel male killed for equine scoliosis
- a 2-year-old female killed for a sarcoid tumor on her head
- a 3-year-old roan stallion who broke his neck
- a 3-year-old bay stud killed for hernia
- a 4-year-old brown mare who broke her neck
- a 4-year-old bay stallion killed for blindness
- a 4-year-old bay male who fractured his rear leg
- a 4-year-old sorrel mare killed for a club foot

- a 5-year-old sorrel stallion killed for blindness
- a 6-year-old sorrel mare who broke her neck
- a 7-year-old Palomino male killed for a broken leg
- a 9-year-old bay male killed for blindness
- a 9-year-old sorrel stallion killed for a leg deformity
- a 10-year-old Palomino mare who broke her neck
- a 10-year-old sorrel mare killed for being blind
- a 12-year-old male stud killed for blindness in the left eye
- a 12-year-old gray mare killed for cancer
- a 15-year-old bay mare killed for blindness
- a 15-year-old sorrel mare killed for reported low body condition
- a 15-year-old chestnut mare killed for a “pre-existing” hip fracture
- a 20-year-old mare killed reportedly for lameness
- a 20-year-old bay mare who broke her neck
- a 20-year-old sorrel stud killed for lordosis
- a 20-year-old bay stallion killed for blindness in the left eye
- a 20-year-old sorrel stallion killed for having no teeth
- a 20-year-old bay male killed for blindness in the left eye
- a 20-year-old sorrel stallion killed for equine lordosis
- a 20+-year-old sorrel stallion killed for having no teeth