



**Horses and their equine relatives (donkeys, mules, hinnies, ponies) are an economically important and treasured part of New Mexico’s western heritage. The vast majority of New Mexicans want equines treated humanely and do not support equine slaughter.**

**New Mexico’s laws should reflect those values and ensure equines are not funneled into the slaughter pipeline through government agency actions.**

## THE PROBLEM:

- New Mexico’s state laws (including the New Mexico Livestock Code) establish a “blanket” disposition for all livestock, including equines. As a result, abandoned or seized equines deemed homeless must be entered into an auction, leaving open the possibility that equines could be sold to so-called “killer-buyers” who then sell them for slaughter in Mexico. The statute needs to articulate an equine disposition process that makes it highly unlikely equines will be sold for slaughter.
- **In Jan. 2019, the NM Livestock Board approved a new process for ensuring equine shelters have the first right to adopt estrays equines, but state statutes only allow this discretion for stray equines, not those abandoned or seized.**
- Equine rescue facilities are often forced to compete at auction for equines they want to rescue and will later spend significant funds to rehabilitate and care for until they can be adopted. Rescue organizations cannot possibly monitor all auctions or afford to always compete with killer-buyers, and they shouldn't have to. Current laws result in New Mexican equines needlessly being exposed to the slaughter pipeline.
- A scientific poll conducted in 2013 revealed that 70% of New Mexican voters oppose the slaughter of horses for human consumption, and don’t want a facility in their community. New Mexico’s laws should ensure that its government agencies do not actively enable funneling equines into the slaughter “pipeline.” ***State statutes should prioritize humane disposition of equines.***
- As of January 2019, there are eleven equine shelters registered by the New Mexico Livestock Board that rescue and care for hundreds of equines, collectively spending nearly \$1.5 million annually. These shelters are responsible for shouldering the burden of the homeless horse population and rely almost exclusively on volunteers and private donations.

## THE SOLUTION:

**Create equine-specific sections of the New Mexico Livestock Code and other laws to ensure humane disposition for all equines handled by the New Mexico Livestock Board and other agencies that take custody of equines.**

- The NM Livestock Board (NMLSB) reports handling approximately 53 equines in 2018 (seized from cruelty cases, and found at-large or abandoned), a manageable number for ensuring humane care and disposition. Almost all equines in their custody are held at the Santa Fe Corrections Facility. Custody of equines would first be offered to one of eleven equine rescues after the NMLSB's required 5-day holding period in exchange for the equines' cost of care. Equines not purchased by a shelter would be subject to a closed bid auction. Equines not purchased through a closed bid auction process would be humanely euthanized by a licensed veterinarian. The average cost of equine euthanasia/disposal is \$201<sup>1</sup>.
- According to the NM Livestock Board, 42 of 53 equines in 2018 were purchased by rescues, 10 were purchased by individuals through closed bid, and 1 horse died while under veterinary care. This demonstrates that given the low numbers of equines that typically reach the custody of the NMLB, healthy horses will almost certainly be purchased either by shelters or individuals, and euthanasia for non-medical reasons will be either non-existent or extremely rare.

<sup>1</sup> Based on data from the Equine Protection Fund which has seven years of experience funding humane euthanasia and disposal of equines across New Mexico (106 animals to date).