



# SENATE BILL 125

"Horse Shelter Rescue Fund"

## Support Essential Horse Care

*Appropriating \$500,000 for horse care through the NM Livestock Board*

### THE PROBLEM:

The New Mexico Livestock Board (NMLB) works with ten non-profit horse shelters that it licenses and regulates to place horses taken up by the board through cruelty or estray cases; some of these rescues also regularly take in horses for their communities, often assisted by government entities, including law enforcement.

Persistent drought, challenging economic times for New Mexico families, and high hay prices all contribute to dire need. Expert care for abandoned, neglected, or cruelly treated horses is critical for suffering individuals and important for the health of our communities.

### THE SOLUTION:

**A recurring appropriation of \$500,000 to the Horse Shelter Rescue Fund of the NM Livestock Board, supporting horse shelters to rescue and care for horses.**

\$500,000 will provide essential operating support to the only legitimate, licensed infrastructure the State can use for the care of seized and estray horses, including for:

- **Feed**
- **Farrier care**
- **Veterinary care**
- **Critical ranch hand wages**

**Some horses need extensive veterinary and farrier care, and expert support and training, for more than two years before being adoptable.** Some horses require lifetime care in sanctuary.

The appropriation will support the critical work of licensed, regulated, and inspected horse rescues, especially those rescues that directly support the work of the State.

- In 2019 alone, licensed rescues took in 136 equines—including 40 from the NMLB, another 27 assisted by law enforcement, and 38 owner surrenders. **The 2019 total licensed horse rescue population was 290 equines.**



Dulce was forced for five years to live in a small pen with barely enough space to turn around in before she was rescued. After months of trimmings and intense expert care, she is a shiny black mare, getting a little better every day, willing to engage with people.

*Photos: Four Corners Equine Rescue*

## HORSE SHELTER RESCUE FUND QUICK FACTS

- **The three largest horse rescues *alone* had annual expenses over \$1.3 million in 2019 and were supported by over 160 volunteers.** Essential care costs such as hay and feed, and labor, for when volunteer labor alone is insufficient, must be provided, especially for horses coming out of vulnerable conditions.
- In 2014, the NMLB worked with [horse rescues](#) it regulates to ensure a distribution of a \$250,000 appropriation through the Horse Shelter Rescue Fund in accordance with NMAC. The 2014 process will be a model for the 2020 distribution of funds and can be adjusted to most efficiently meet needs on the ground.



**“I was a new volunteer and just happened to be there when the NM Livestock Board arrived. I gasped when I saw the horses unload.** I had never seen a starved horse. I couldn't hold back the tears. It was so upsetting to witness the neglect of a human. I by no means had any horsemanship skills at the time. The only horseback riding I did was in Girl Scouts and family vacations on stable horses.

**Weeks turned into months and months into years.** Indigo filled out and I improved my skills by taking classes at the ranch, watching hours of online horse trainer videos, and reading everything I could about horses. Eventually, I sponsored Indigo and was determined to ride her. If I could ride her, I told myself I would adopt her.

**Today, after hundreds of lessons (literally), Indigo is a rideable, calm, gentle riding partner.**

**I adopted her and moved her to Albuquerque. I've even learned to trailer her myself. We've been to the mountains and down south on trail rides. Last year, we gave a shot at ranch sorting (moving cattle from one pen to the next in numerical order). It's a very good day when I get to ride Indigo or take her for a walk.”**

*Excerpt and photos of Indigo & Char by Walkin N Circles Ranch*