

SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 243

Sponsors: Rep. Joseph Sanchez, Rep. Tara Lujan, Rep. G. Andrés Romero, Rep. Cynthia Borrego

The Problem: New Mexico's Equine Shelters Are At Capacity and Underfunded

- **The State of New Mexico (including Law Enforcement) relies on a network of nonprofit equine shelters** to take in and care for owner-relinquished, stray, and abused equines (horses, donkeys, and mules).
- Unlike dog & cat shelters, New Mexico currently has **no government-run equine shelters**, and nonprofit equine shelters receive **little and irregular funding from the state**.
- The New Mexico Legislature created the Equine Shelter Rescue Fund in 2013 (led by Sen. George Muñoz), an expenditure fund to support the services equine shelters provide in feeding and caring for abused and homeless equines—but **it has never had a reliable, substantial funding stream**.

HB 243 Provides the Solution

House Bill 243 does three things:

- 1 **Appropriates a much-needed jolt of funding to the Equine Shelter Rescue Fund: \$500,000;**
- 2 **Improves & Moves the Rescue Fund from the Livestock Board to the Department of Agriculture**, which is better equipped to manage an annual grant program with large sums of money, with stronger grantee qualification and reporting requirements to ensure fund accountability; and
- 3 **Creates and funds a new Equine Welfare Trust Fund** to create an adequate and sustainable source of annual funding for the Rescue Fund (appropriating \$5 Million to seed the Trust Fund).

Why a Trust Fund?

Current equine sheltering and care needs are urgent, growing, and will only grow worse in the coming years.

Establishing an Equine Welfare Trust Fund is a responsible way to ensure necessary annual funding for the Rescue Fund, to support capacity building across the network of equine shelters that provide essential equine care services to our state.



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Public Services Supported through the Rescue Fund



- Shelter or placement for abandoned, relinquished and cruelly treated equines, based on capacity;
- Training for equines to make them more adoptable;
- Feed and pasture to maintain equines;
- Basic and emergency veterinary care or husbandry, including sterilization, fertility control, or hoof care; and
- Administering adoption programs and services.

About New Mexico's Equine Shelters

- New Mexico's network of registered nonprofit equine shelters take in vulnerable equines from a variety of sources, including owner-surrendered, stray, abandoned, and abused animals. But lack of funding limits the life-saving care and safe placement shelters can provide, and increases the chances of horses being auctioned to kill buyers and entering the slaughter pipeline.
- **If not for these equine shelters, the horses, donkeys, and mules taken into NM Livestock Board or other law enforcement custody would remain the responsibility of the state—to either auction, place for care, euthanize, or (for lack of options) remain in an abusive situation.**
- **For the years 2023 through 2025, equine shelters took in 391 equines, 196 of which (50%) came from law enforcement.**
- The Equine Shelter Rescue Fund, established in 2013 and currently administered by the Livestock Board, helps to cover some of the costs shelters incur in caring for the equines taken in from the State. The Rescue Fund has been funded with small annual tax check-off donations and intermittent one-time state legislative appropriations.



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