

ALBERTA WILD HORSE POPULATION

QUICK FACTS



- More than 1,400 wild horses reside in six Equine Management Zones (EMZ) that encompass nearly 2.2 million acres in Alberta.
- Wild horse aerial population counts have been conducted annually since 2013 by the Alberta government, however, there has been little geographical consistency in the areas surveyed from year-to-year making the government's population count data not statistically sound nor accurate.
- Beginning in 2022, the Help Albert Wildies Society (HAWS), a wild horse advocacy and watchdog group based in Olds, Alberta, began conducting its own aerial counts in the most populous EMZ (Sundre) using flight paths identical to the government's for comparative analysis.
- According to HAWS' 2023 aerial survey 684 horses were counted in the Sundre EMZ — an increase of only 25 horses over the 2022 census of the same geographical area. The government reported their 2023 count totaled 969 horses in the Sundre Zone — a 51% increase over its 2022 census.
- HAWS challenged the government's 2023 count which made it appear the Alberta Wild horse population was “skyrocketing” when in fact wild horse population counts have been static in the Sundre EMZ since 2018.
- In a meeting on September 28, 2023 between HAWS and Alberta's Rangeland Office, that is responsible for the annual wild horse aerial counts, government officials agreed their 2023 wild horse count was inflated given the department flew an undisclosed 500 more kilometers in the Sundre EMZ than in 2022.
- This inflated number puts wild horses in the Sundre EMZ perilously close to the threshold outlined in the government's recently-released “Feral Horse Framework Management Plan” that would trigger culling and/or a contraception program designed to reduce population levels below agreed-upon thresholds.
- As a result of the meeting with HAWS, Rangeland Office officials acknowledged the wild horse population in the Sundre EMZ has remained static since 2018 and henceforth will advise HAWS in advance what flight paths will be flown each year so identical, independent, comparative wild horse population counts can be conducted in the Sundre EMZ. However they refuse to amend their official statistical report that denotes there has been a 51% increase in the wild horse population in the Sundre EMZ.

*** See Background Information for Supporting Maps, Graphs, and Charts