



# Cattle vs. Wild Horses 2002-2018

## All data BLM

BLM	Livestock Permittees				Wild Horses & Burros			Cattle vs. WH + B	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Source	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Fiscal Year	Grazing Receipts (2018 Dollars)	Grazing Fee/AUM	Animal Units (annualized)	Cattle Equivalent	Est. Wild Horses	Est. Wild Burros	Est. WH+B	Cattle vs. WHB	Cattle vs. WH
2002	\$21,017,492	\$1.43	1,224,796	2,449,591	34,496	4,319	38,815	63	71
2003	\$17,025,521	\$1.35	1,050,958	2,101,916	32,145	5,041	37,186	57	65
2004	\$8,724,182	\$1.43	508,402	1,016,804	32,290	4,845	37,135	27	31
2005	\$12,554,258	\$1.79	584,463	1,168,925	27,369	4,391	31,760	37	43
2006	\$21,643,767	\$1.56	1,156,184	2,312,368	27,593	3,613	31,206	74	84
2007	\$19,178,075	\$1.35	1,183,832	2,367,664	25,689	2,874	28,563	83	92
2008	\$18,679,612	\$1.35	1,153,062	2,306,125	29,644	3,461	33,105	70	78
2009	\$20,539,265	\$1.35	1,267,856	2,535,712	33,102	3,838	36,940	69	77
2010	\$17,242,800	\$1.35	1,064,370	2,128,741	33,692	4,673	38,365	55	63
2011	\$16,641,022	\$1.35	1,027,224	2,054,447	33,014	5,483	38,497	53	62
2012	\$16,351,317	\$1.35	1,009,341	2,018,681	31,453	5,841	37,294	54	64
2013	\$15,534,390	\$1.35	958,913	1,917,826	33,780	6,825	40,605	47	57
2014	\$12,100,000	\$1.35	746,914	1,493,827	40,815	8,394	49,209	30	37
2015	\$15,442,569	\$1.69	761,468	1,522,936	47,329	10,821	58,150	26	32
2016	\$18,936,663	\$2.11	747,893	1,495,787	55,311	11,716	67,027	22	27
2017	\$17,080,958	\$1.87	761,184	1,522,367	59,483	13,191	72,674	21	26
2018	\$16,105,000	\$1.41	951,832	1,903,664	66,976	14,975	81,951	23	28

Sources by column: (1) BLM budget justification reports. 2002-2017 are actual. 2018 \$ are estimated. All figures converted to 2018 dollars. (2) BLM website (3) calculated by dividing column 1 by column 2, then by 12 (4) multiply column 3 by 2 since 1 animal unit = 1 cow and her calf or 1 horse (5 and 6) BLM website (7) add columns 5 and 6 (8) column 4 divided by column 7 (9) column 4 divided by column 5.

### Who's overgrazing BLM lands? Cattle. BLM data shows it.

The above spreadsheet converts grazing receipts reported by the BLM for private livestock grazed under the public lands grazing program, allowing a head-to-head comparison between the number of wild horses (WH) estimated by the BLM and permitted cattle grazing from 2002-2018. What does the data show? Cattle historically outnumbering WH by a factor of 71:1 (in 2002), 92:1 (2007) and 28:1 (2018).

This isn't the story the BLM has been telling the public. In fact, the BLM doesn't report subsidized livestock numbers at all to the public. It hides them, instead spinning a story of overpopulation and overgrazing by wild horses to justify costly WH roundups, removals, sterilization and sale/euthanasia proposals. The above ratios (column 9) prove that justification to be false.

And the ratios low-ball how many cattle may actually be competing with the wild horses for water, forage and land, since grazing fees don't reflect actual livestock usage but are calculated according to self-reported rancher AUMs and therefore do not reflect underreporting and trespass grazing (like the more than \$1 million that Cliven Bundy was reported to owe in back grazing fees in 2014). So the actual number of subsidized, privately owned livestock on public lands is likely much higher.

## Who loses U.S. taxpayers the most money? Cattle.

Another story told by the BLM, ranchers, and supporters in congress is that captive wild horses need to be sold without restriction, likely to slaughter, or outright destroyed because they are estimated to cost taxpayers up to **\$1 billion dollars over a lifetime in captivity.**

But the federal grazing program subsidies lose taxpayers **\$1.25 billion over 10 years** (or \$125 million a year) in direct costs by the BLM's own estimates. With direct and indirect costs factored in, those taxpayer losses rise to **between an estimated \$500 million and \$1 billion a year**, according to the GAO. Why do the BLM and Congress focus on wild horses when it's subsidized private livestock on public lands that waste the most taxpayer funds and destroy sensitive grass and forest land and wildlife habitat?

### Other key findings:

Public lands ranching subsidizes large livestock operations owned by millionaires and billionaires; less so mom-and-pop ranchers. As reported by *New York Times* science writer Stephen Nash in his 2017 book, *Grand Canyon for Sale*, "Some grazing allotments are shared among several permittees; some permittees control several allotments; sometimes it's just one allotment, one permittee. That fuzzes up the picture available to us from BLM data, but it tells a hard-edged story, nonetheless. The distribution of this wealth of public land is skewed, to a staggering degree," (page 137). He also writes:

- About 15,000 individuals and corporate entities hold public-lands grazing permits.
- The **top 1% of them — only some 152 permittees — hold interests in an astonishing expanse, about a third of the total BLM grazing land area: some seventy-seven thousand square MILES.**
- The **next 5 percent of them hold about the next third** of the total land area.
- The **bottom 94 percent — about 14,000 permittees — account for only the final third** of the BLM's public grazing lands.
- The identities of the permittees are sometimes obscured by corporate names, but data provided by the BLM shows that the folks leasing great swaths of public land to graze their cattle and enjoy enormous government subsidies include both people and corporations on Forbes billionaires and "Richest Americans" lists. (pages 137-138).

Just 1.9% of the US beef supply comes from public lands, according to Erik Molvar of the Western Watersheds Project. That's a paltry amount of beef produced by powerful special interests at a very steep cost to the public and public lands.

### Conclusion:

When advocates claim that livestock outnumbers and out-grazes wild horses on public lands, this is not an emotional argument or an opinion. It is an argument based on the above data *from the BLM and other government sources — data that the BLM doesn't make available to the public and media because it doesn't want them to know...about the private livestock, their special interest owners, the damage they cause, and the massive subsidies they are taking from average Americans.*

Information/data compiled by [dailypitchfork.org](http://dailypitchfork.org).



*"In this era of American politics, our entire public land heritage is facing the prospect of being put up for sale. I hope this excellent book will awaken all Americans to an unprecedented threat to our parks, national monuments, wilderness areas, wildlife sanctuaries and ocean sanctuaries."*

**Bruce Babbitt**  
Former Secretary of the Interior

## **MORE on who controls public grazing lands from Stephen Nash's book, "Grand Canyon for Sale":**

**Pages 137-138:** "The identities of the [public grazing] permittees are sometimes obscured by corporate names, but data provided by the BLM shows that the folks leasing great swaths of public land to graze their cattle and enjoy enormous government subsidies include the following:

- **Bruce McCaw's** net worth was \$925 million in 2016. His many ranches in Idaho and other states include at least **540 square miles** of public grazing land.
- **Barrick Gold**, a Canadian mining corporation whose market capitalization was at \$18.8 billion in 2016, is also a U.S. public-lands cowpoke — with **at least 695 square miles** of grazing land.
- **Stanley Kroenke** is a real estate magnate, sports-team owner, and one of the nation's largest private landowners, with a net worth of \$8 billion in 2017. He and his wife, Ann Walton Kroenke — of Walmart's Walton family, with a \$6 billion net worth that year — graze **at least 460 square miles** of public land in Montana and Wyoming.
- **The heirs of the late hotelier W. Barron Hilton**, whose net worth was reported at \$800 million in 2012, inherited public-land grazing permits in California and Nevada totaling **at least 350 square miles**.
- **Mary Hewlett Jaffe**, an heir of the Hewlett-Packard fortune and member of one of the United States' billion-dollar families, controls public lands grazing permits in Idaho of **at least 250 square miles**.
- **The J.R. Simplot Corporation** is one of the largest U.S. public-lands ranching outfits. Its lands make up at least 2,800 square miles of grazing allotments in California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon and Utah.
- **The Southern Nevada Water Authority** holds grazing permits for at least 1,450 square miles of Nevada's federal land in the region, and cattle are grazed 'to preserve the ranching lifestyle,' I was told by an authority spokesperson."

**Page 139:** "The Forest Service allows grazing on about 117,000 square miles of our national forests. If anything, its assessments of the impacts of cattle on the health of these forests are even more vague than those of the BLM. There are 3,772 permittees for these grazing leases, and the pattern of ownership is strikingly similar to the BLM's control and most of that enormous landscape is concentrated in very few hands. The top 200 permittees — just over 5 percent of the total — control about a third of the total Forest Service land."

### **Endorsements for "Grand Canyon for Sale":**

"In this era of American Politics, our entire public land heritage is facing the prospect of being put up for sale. I hope this excellent book will awaken all Americans to an unprecedented threat to our parks, national monuments, wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, and ocean sanctuaries." — Bruce Babbitt, Former United States Secretary of the Interior

"The lucid and vivid discussion in this book will be celebrated by everyone who is working to protect America's national parks and public lands." — James D. Nations, Former Vice President for the Center for Park Research, National Parks Conservation Association, and author of *"The State of America's National Parks."*

"A timely unveiling of the systemic theft of our nation's most treasured landscapes." — Roger Clark, Grand Canyon Trust.