

Summary Comparison: Domestic Livestock as Compared to Wild Horse and Burro Use on Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management (livestock vs. WH&B)








Key Facts:

- ❑ There are more WH&B on BLM public lands today than there were in 1971 when the WH&B Act passed. There are nearly 37,000 WH&B on public land today, while in 1971 there were an estimated 27,000 WH&B.
- ❑ The BLM is not removing excess WH&B to make more forage available for use by domestic livestock. In fact, there has been a **43%** reduction in permitted livestock use since 1941, when the first forage allocations to domestic livestock under the provisions of the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act were made.
- ❑ ***From 1971, when the Act was passed, to 2008, forage allocations for WH&B increased by 43%, while forage allocations for livestock decreased by 34%.***
- ❑ Actual forage use by WH&B in 2008 was **122%** of the permitted use, or appropriate management level (AML), in 2008.

Language explanation: In the Public Land Statistics, when referring to livestock, the term **authorized use** is used to describe **actual use (as billed for)**; and the term **grazing permits and leases in force** is used to describe the term **permitted use**, or the outside potential of what could be used. Therefore, to make this chart clearer to understand and to not confuse those who may look at this chart and compare it to the Public Land Statistics, the term actual use = authorized use (PLS term) and the term permitted use = grazing permits and leases in force (PLS term). When comparing livestock to WH&B, the term **permitted use** is used for both categories of animals: it is the outside potential of how many livestock may be grazed, and the outside, or high end of the appropriate management level, for WH&B.

Q – How many acres does BLM manage for livestock as compared to WH&B?		
A – The BLM permits livestock use on 5 times as many acres as for WH&B due to limitations in the 1971 WH&B Act. This Act requires the BLM to manage WH&B only on those areas of the public lands where they were found in 1971.		
Item	Livestock*	Wild Horses and Burros
Herd Area Acreage (WH&B – 1971)	N/A	51.3 million acres (HAs)
BLM Acres Permitted for Use Today	160 million acres	31.9 million acres (62% of original HAs)

Q – Is the BLM removing wild horses and burros to increase use by domestic livestock?
 A – No. There has been a **43% reduction** in permitted livestock use since 1941 when the first forage allocations to domestic livestock under the provisions of the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act were made. By contrast, the forage allocated to WH&B has **increased by 43%** since 1971 when the WH&B Act was passed.

LIVESTOCK 	1941 <i>(When the first forage allocations to domestic livestock were made, under the provisions of the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act)</i>	1971 <i>(When WH&B Act was passed)</i>	2008 <i>(Today)</i>	Percentage Difference From 1941-1971	Percentage Difference From 1971-Today	Percentage Difference From 1941-Today
Permitted Use (AUMs)	22 million AUMs	14.4 million AUMs	12.5 million AUMs	35% Reduction 	34% Reduction 	43% Reduction 
Actual Use (AUMs)	Not available	12.1 million AUMs	8.6 million AUMs	Not available	29% Reduction 	Not available
WILD HORSES & BURROS 	1941	1971	2008	Percentage Difference From 1941-1971	Percentage Difference From 1971-Today	Percentage Difference From 1941-Today
Permitted Use (AUMs)	N/A	N/A	309,138 AUMs <i>(at high end of AML of 27,219 animals)</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A
Actual Use (AUMs)	N/A	264,000 AUMs	376,494 AUMs	N/A	43% Increase 	N/A

Note: Although there has been a 38% reduction in the amount of acreage authorized for WH&B use since 1971, there has been a 43% increase in the forage allocated for their use. This is largely due to an increase in the number of horses the BLM is managing, and a decrease in the number of burros. In 1971, there were about 17,000 horses (1 AUM/month/horse) and 10,000 burros (½ AUM/month/burro). The reduction in burros is mainly due to the transfer of land to the National Park Service through the California Desert Protection Act.

Q – How does actual forage use compare with the permitted use?

- A –
- Actual livestock use in 2008 was only 69% of the permitted use.
 - Actual livestock use in 2008 was only 39% of what was originally permitted in 1941.
 - By contrast, actual WH&B use in 2008 was 122% of the permitted use, or appropriate management level.

Q – Why does it take 4.6 times as many acres to manage a WH&B as it does for livestock?

A – Domestic livestock are managed intensively through rest or deferred rotation grazing systems that provide for periodic growing season rest of key forage plants. By contrast, WH&B are managed less intensively (as wildlife). WH&B graze year-round in preferred use areas. Their numbers are managed to preserve and protect key forage plants and water.

Item	Livestock*	Wild Horses & Burros
Acres Per AUM (Authorized)	12.8	99.94
Acres Per AUM (2008 Actual)	18.61	84.73

Explanation: there were 160 million acres permitted for 12.5 million AUMs (12.8 acres per AUM) in 2008. However, livestock permittees did not use all of their permitted AUMs. Actual use was 8.6 million AUMs in 2008; therefore, the number of acres available to the animals increases to 18.61 acres per AUM. Less animals grazed = more acres available to them, and this means there will be a lighter impact on the land.

By contrast, the number of wild horses and burros on public land exceeded the amount permitted. Therefore, there were less acres available per horse. More horses = less available acres per horse = more impact to land.

Q – What is the appropriate management level, or AML, for WH&B (i.e., the target number)?

A – 26,578 wild horses and burros.

Target Number 2010 (AML)	26,578
Actual Number (2008)	33,105
Actual Number (2/28/2009)	36,940

*Cattle, horses, sheep and goats