

Office of the Premier Attn: Premier Stelmach
Room 307, Legislature Bldg
10800 - 9th Ave Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
Office of the Prime Minister Attn: Prime Minister Harper
80 Wellington St. Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Premier Stelmach and Prime Minister Harper;

On April 28, 2009 three wild horses were found shot to death in the Foothills of Central Alberta. These were a pregnant mare, her yearling colt and a young stud. The colt was shot in the chest and ran up a hill for about 100 feet before collapsing. The stud had been shot in the stomach, and suffered a long agonizing death. His head was caught between two trees when he fell. The mare looked ready to foal within a day or two, and appeared to have gone into labour after she was shot, as her birthing sack was visible when she was found.

The RCMP and wildlife authorities are investigating the killings. It is believed that these horses were shot from a nearby road with a high-powered rifle. The death of these four, which includes the unborn foal, raises the total of 29 wild horses found shot since 2002*. How many others have been killed and not discovered or reported is anyone's guess.

Senseless violence perpetrated against wild horses is a common occurrence in some parts of the USA, as exemplified in the 1998 "Reno Massacre" in Nevada, where thirty-four mustangs were gunned down. Canadians have come to think of our country as a kinder and gentler place than the USA, maybe some what naively, but well in sync with the world's perception of Canada. Considering that after all these deaths no one has ever been identified and charged with the crime, it is not difficult to perceive a conspiracy of silence and a disconcerting lack of determination and political will on the part of those investigating these events.

Back in the 1960's Sable Island off the coast of Nova Scotia became a federally protected reserve for the wild horses whereas, in Alberta, they are deemed feral and covered under the Stray Animals Act. Why the difference in treatment? In regards to the horses being labelled feral by the provincial and federal governments what studies have been done to prove that they are indeed feral (domestic escapees) and not wild?

Furthermore, there have been horse bones found in Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan which are deemed to be 800 years old or older. The most recent find in the Yukon shows a horse that is radiocarbon dated $26,280 \pm 210$ years BP. Hence this makes the horses indisputably indigenous, to not only Alberta, but North America as well. In spite of all these scientific findings the federal and provincial governments still classify these horses as non-native. This biased attitude is totally unscientific, illogical, and unacceptable, please explain.

As a concerned citizen I am submitting this letter to express my grave concern and that of thousands of others over these senseless acts of violence, which lead to the unconscionable deaths of these unique creatures. I am imploring the federal and provincial governments to do the right thing and reclassify the Alberta wild horses as a distinct species, with their own special status, with protection comparable to that of other wildlife species, free of capture, harassment, abuse and death at the hands of man. I look forward to your response.

- In September 2009, another cadaver was found, death determined to be due to gunshots, bringing the known equine body count up to 30.

Signé / signed. (P.S. Inclure adresse pour assurer crédibilité / Include address for credibility)