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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*Grass Roots Horse is a grass roots organization formed for the welfare of wild horses. We have had someone in the field for a long time and they are currently at Antelope Complex wild horse roundup. We respectfully ask the help of Congress to shut this roundup down and to enforce the humane care and treatment of wild horses. Below is an open letter to the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress from our observer in the field Laura Leigh.*

**Open Letter to the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress,**

On January 31, 2011 my camera lens caught a pilot driving a lone horse to within feet, perhaps inches, on a snowy hillside. I was approaching the trap site late as the BLM had not updated the "hotline" and I approached the trap from the opposite side of the "observation" area. I was met on the road by BLM personnel and guided in. The mistake in protocol as to the lack of meeting information was acknowledged and I observed most of the rest of the day from the designated location.

This date was after the incident the "report" BLM has issued on the conduct at the roundup has focused.

The "investigation" has focused on a single incident of a mare collapsing at the trap site. It has not included any of the continued observations.

On February 2, 2011 I was interviewed allegedly in connection with an investigation the BLM claimed to be taking seriously. The interview was conducted by Chris Hanefeld, lead Public Relations in the Ely office, and Shelle field manager Mary D'Aversa. The conversation lead me to believe that the investigation was no more than an effort to obtain my files not for the purpose of investigating conduct but to discredit documentation.

The activity of February 3, as the HSUS (Humane Society of the United States) representative was present, continued to affirm my inclination toward believing that this was in no way a serious investigation. Further conduct by the contractor away from the trap instilled an honest fear in me about the professionalism of this contractor. I observed the contractor driving a trailer so quickly on rough dirt roads that objects were being bounced from the trailer and reckless driving that could endanger others present.

On February 4, 2011 I issued a statement that my cooperation in any investigation would be given if an outside agency such as Congress, or appointed by Congress, was undertaken. I consider the BLM to have a conflict of interest and they have been complicit in the activities surrounding the lack of humane handling of our protected wild horses.

On February 6, 2011 I was held a considerable distance from the trap site and was unable to view the condition of horses coming off the range. Documentation of the pilot continuing to target single horses in high speed chases and continually coming to within "arm's length" of horses was obtained.

I was not the only witness as BLM personnel were present and the woman with me, Patti Blunt, assured me that she would bring up what she saw that day at the evening meeting. None of those observations are included in the report released by the BLM.

Continued conduct at the Antelope Complex roundup has been documented. The conduct continues to demonstrate a basic lack of "humane care" occurring on this roundup.

I beg Congress to take the necessary steps to enforce the most basic premise of the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act. I implore Congress to halt this travesty of action by the agency mandated by Congress to protect the "living symbol of the pioneer spirit of the west."

The activities of this agency range from inaccurate inventory, closed door facilities where our horses are dying because of the nature in which they were removed from the range to roundup practices that need to halt in a nation that claims to be a leader in humane care of its citizens and the creatures that inhabit this great nation with us.

Sincerely,  
Laura Leigh

Note: Ms. Leigh has observed more roundups than any BLM personnel in the last twelve months. She has travelled to various locations and observed protocol at holding facilities, documented horses in the wild and witnessed roundups in three states. She holds a variety of positions that range from journalist to Subject Matter Expert for Equine publications and welfare organizations.

Attached is the document (pdf) titled "Preliminary Report\_Antelope" that includes some of the Observations and photographs. .

[http://www.grassrootshorse.com/herdwatch/images/PreliminaryReport\\_Antelope.pdf](http://www.grassrootshorse.com/herdwatch/images/PreliminaryReport_Antelope.pdf)

[Preliminary Report Antelope Wild Horse Roundup 2011](#)