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Comments: I have lived and grown up in Heber my entire life. I am in the forest around Heber more than most people throughout the year and have seen first hand the explosion of horses in the last 10 years. The management plan explains that the horses are feral horses (anyone that has been around Heber for more than 10 years also knows this) yet we are making a plan to keep them around? What other animal in the world could we release, let numbers explode, have proof they are feral and then instead of removing them completely we set up a plan to keep them around? The answer is no other feral animal would be treated like this. The reason? The horse loving groups push and shove and yell and scream to get what they want and groups like the forest service give in to them to make them happy. The forest service needs to step up and implement an appropriate plan to remove these animals without giving in to the pressure of horse advocates. The current proposed plans are extremely expensive and will not have an effect on the horse population for years and even then it will take so long for the numbers to come down the damage to our forest and the elk and deer populations will already be done.

There are places just 5 years ago you could see hundreds of elk in unit 3c where now all you can find are hundreds of horses and piles of horse feces as far as the eye can see. The Arizona Game and Fish has already begun dropping tag numbers due to the decrease in elk populations in the unit. What gives a feral horse the right to come in and destroy populations of native animals?

Whatever route is taken to control these animals needs to be the fastest and most cost effective method. We have let it get out of hand far too long and it is time for a quick and effective solution. The horse number estimates in the plan are far lower than reality, therefore the only plausible way to ensure only 100 horses remain in the forest is the following: bring in 104 horses into the territory where they will remain. At that point any horse found outside of the territory should be removed immediately. A plan that estimates 400 horses and removes 300 to get the target number of 100 will not be effective because there are many many more horses than the estimates I saw in the plan.

This has been going on for almost 20 years now and we cannot afford to sit around and wait another 5 or even 1 year to begin removing these feral horses. The forest service works to protect our resources and the animals that use those resources. They do not work to please and coddle the horse advocates. Please do what is best for the forest and the native animals.