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BLM illegally sold thousands of wild horses for slaughter: report

By [Kellan Howell](#) - *The Washington Times* - Saturday, October 24, 2015

The Bureau of Land Management, the agency tasked with protecting wild horses and cattle and their grazing lands, sold 1,794 federally-protected wild horses to a Colorado rancher who sent them to slaughter, a new report confirmed.

Between 2009 and 2012, rancher Tom Davis purchased the horses through the agency's Wild Horse and Burro Program (WH&B) and wrongfully sent them to slaughter, according to the report from the Interior Department's Office of Inspector General. According to the allegations and news reports, Mr. Davis also had farming and trucking connections with former Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.

"We determined that BLM did not follow current law while managing WH&B. BLM also failed to follow its own policy of limiting horse sales and ensuring that the horses sold went to good homes and were not slaughtered," investigators wrote in the report.

Mr. Davis admitted that most of the horses that he purchased through the BLM went to slaughter.

He told investigators that "in selling so many loads of horses, BLM had to know that the horses would end up at the slaughterhouse."

The wrongful sale also cost taxpayers \$140,000 to deliver truckloads of horses to Mr. Davis. He paid \$10 a piece for the horses, or less than \$18,000 total, and made as much as \$154,000 in profits by selling them for slaughter, according to the report.

BLM employees never attempted to verify the information that Mr. Davis provided regarding his intentions for the horses he bought, despite the unusually large number of horses being sold to him, investigators wrote. The agency also did not stop selling horses to Mr. Davis after receiving reports that he was sending the horses to slaughter.

The OIG declined to investigate Mr. Davis' ties to Mr. Salazar.

The investigation was referred to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Colorado as well as the State of Colorado Conejos County District Attorney's Office, which declined civil and criminal prosecution, according to the report.

"It took more than three years for the OIG to confirm what we've always known – that the BLM sold 1,795 federally-protected wild horses to a known kill buyer who sold them to slaughter," said Suzanne Roy, Director of the American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign (AWHPC). "Unfortunately, there will be no justice for these mustangs, who suffered a brutal death in Mexican slaughter plants. No one at the BLM is being held accountable for this betrayal, and Tom Davis is not being prosecuted for violating his contractual obligation to not sell the horses for slaughter."

In their response to the report, BLM officials said they are taking the matter very seriously and have taken preventative measures to ensure horses sold by the agency do not end up at slaughterhouses in the future.

BLM officials also said that the agency no longer has any business relationship with Mr. Davis and will not in the future.

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