

Testimony – Feb. 12, 2009 – Mack Cole

Chairman Representative Mike Jopek and members of the House Agriculture Committee: I come before you as a strong proponent of HB-418, the horse-processing facility bill.

My name is Mack Cole and I live on the family ranch as a fourth generation Montanan. I raise a few paint and quarter horses.

If Montana could establish a horse processing facility, it would be a great business for Montana and a benefit for the entire equine business. With no horse processing facility in the U.S., horses have to be shipped to Mexico or Canada which is expensive and puts an unneeded strain on the already ailing horses.

The Bureau of Land Management, which manages the Wild Horse and Burro act, realizes that something has to be done to process unwanted horses. BLM now has more than 33,000 head of horses that no one wants to adopt. Taxpayers paid more than \$38.8 million to finance the horse program in 2007. It is estimated that if a processing facility isn't established, the cost in federal tax dollars will reach \$85 million by 2012.

This legislation will allow a safe and economical way to process horses and will eliminate feral horses trespassing and creating a safety hazard along our highways.