

The Ian Somerhalder Foundation Announces \$20,000 in Grants for Wild Horse Fertility Control

ISF Joins Forces with Two Prestigious Organizations to Aid in the Fertility Control of Wild Horses and Mustangs

The American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign (AWHPC) recently launched a program to humanely manage iconic animals on Nevada’s historic Virginia Range. The Ian Somerhalder Foundation (ISF) and AWHPC announce a new partnership to keep the historic horses of Nevada’s Virginia Range wild and free. This innovative program will use a safe and humane approach to manage the more than 1,500 wild horses that inhabit the magnificent Virginia Range, which encompasses more than 280,000 acres in northern Nevada. By year two, it will be the largest humane management program for wild horses in the world.

The program is being implemented through a [cooperative agreement](#) between AWHPC, under the auspices of its founding organization, Return to Freedom, and the Nevada Department of Agriculture.

ISF has generously provided a \$15,000 grant to underwrite the fertility control portion of the program, a vaccine aimed at safely and humanely managing the Virginia Range horses. Use of the vaccine, which is not harmful to horses and causes no harm to the surrounding environment, will help manage population numbers and reduce the risk of horses venturing into nearby neighborhoods and roadways. It provides an alternative to the cruel and costly removal of wild horses from their homes on the range.

“We are proud to be part of this historic public-private partnership to keep the Virginia Range horses free and safe on the range,” said Ian Somerhalder. “This program establishes a model for humane management of wild horses to *keep wild horses wild*, and prevent them from being removed from their homes and families in the wild.”

The Virginia Range program is the largest-ever public-private partnership created to manage wild horses and will benefit public safety and Nevada taxpayers, while preserving the health and safety of the area’s native horses. Nevada groups assisting with the program include the Hidden Valley Wild Horse Protection Fund, Virginia Range Wildlife Protection Association, Wild Horse Preservation League, Virginia Range Sanctuary and Wild Horse Connection.

“Without the support of the Ian Somerhalder Foundation and the hard work done by folks on the ground in Nevada, we wouldn’t have the resources to make this program possible,” said Deniz Bolbol, AWHPC director of programs and head of the Virginia Range project. “This public-private partnership shows how local, national, and private and public entities are working together to make humane management of wild horses a success.”

In order to further the initiative of wild horse fertility control, ISF announces an additional grant in the amount of \$5,000 awarded to the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) for *Advancing Immunocontraception Fertility Control*.

The HSUS’ project, titled PZP Purdue Research—Advancing Immunocontraception Fertility Control, seeks to make fertility control the primary management standard for wild horses, deer and other problem wildlife populations in the United States. Since 1992, HSUS has worked with researchers to test the *porcine zona pellucida* (PZP) immunocontraceptive vaccine on populations of wild animals, beginning with the famous wild ponies on the Assateague Island National Seashore.

The PZP vaccine has been well-tested on wild horses and deer, and has been proven to be safe, effective and humane. Mares and does vaccinated with PZP produce antibodies which bind to the membranes surrounding their eggs, blocking fertilization. This initial methodology and process was developed more than 30 years ago. This new research into which proteins and epitopes are critical for an effective anti-fertility response is needed to develop a synthetic recombinant PZP that is more consistent and cheaper to produce without the need to use animals to produce it. PZP would be better for wildlife—and more appealing to government agencies and communities— if the delivery process is improved, and made more cost-beneficial and sustainable.

This research will allow for the humane regulation of various wildlife species that are deemed a nuisance or worse. Additionally, it will save taxpayers money by eliminating costly roundups and culls, as well as advance a more humane and innovative approach to managing wildlife.

The HSUS, in partnership with Purdue University, proposes a five-year project to make improvements to the existing vaccine by implementing the following:

- Increase the efficacy of the vaccine, reducing the cost to use it and, the use of animals to produce it
- Increase the initial immune response to PZP in wild horses, burros and deer
- Develop a longer-acting vaccine; reduce the number of times animals will need to be retreated over their lifetimes

ISF, AWHPC, HSUS and Return to Freedom are all working diligently to protect humans and animals alike with numerous initiatives to control the fertility and population of wild animals. There are countless benefits to these programs that will lead to a greater ecosystem and, subsequently, a greater world.

ISF, founded by actor and environmental/animal advocate Ian Somerhalder, is dedicated to empowering, educating and collaborating with people and projects to positively impact the planet and its creatures. ISF focuses on raising awareness about environmental and animal protection issues, supporting initiatives to promote green energy, global conservation and anti-animal cruelty programs, and empowering youth to become a united and spirited force for change.

The [American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign \(AWHPC\)](#) is a coalition of more than 60 horse advocacy, public interest, and conservation organizations dedicated to preserving the American wild horse in viable, free-roaming herds for generations to come, as part of our national heritage.