



## **Salt River Truth: A Declaration of Principles for the Management of the Salt River Horse Herd**

This Declaration affirms the ethical foundations of Salt River Truth, establishing principles to guide the responsible management of the Salt River Horse Herd in a manner that honors their well-being, the land that sustains them, and the community that cherishes their presence.


### **Principle 1: The Herd as Part of a Living Ecosystem**

 The Salt River Horse Herd must be understood as part of a larger living ecosystem, interconnected with plants, animals, water, and climate, each possessing intrinsic value independent of human use. No single species can be privileged above the integrity of the whole. Horse-centric views are speciesist and therefore ethically indefensible.


### **Principle 2: Long-Term Survival Over Numbers**

 The herd's well-being and resilience matter more than arbitrary numerical goals. What is morally required is long-term survival and thriving, not short-term head counts. Effective management must therefore secure conditions for intergenerational flourishing, rather than rely on temporary benchmarks that create only the illusion of success.


### **Principle 3: Beyond Human Labels**

 The horses' reality cannot be reduced to human-created constructs such as "wild," "domestic," or "feral," categories that obscure more than they reveal and fail to capture their true nature and lived experience. Their needs and interests must be understood in their own right, independent of the conceptual frameworks imposed upon them. To impose such labels is not to clarify but to distort the ontological reality of their existence.


### **Principle 4: Stewardship of the Land and Horses Together**

 The land that sustains the horses is itself living and vulnerable. The health of the land and the well-being of the horses are inseparable, creating for humans a moral responsibility to protect both. True care demands restoration of damaged habitats, respect for natural processes, and recognition that the fate of the horses is bound to the fate of the land they inhabit.


### **Principle 5: Humane and Ethical Treatment**

 Every action must uphold the humane treatment of the Salt River horse herd. Every decision must honor the horses' dignity, protect them from suffering, and ensure their flourishing. Joy in their presence must be guided by responsibility. Humane stewardship requires consistency, compassion, and vigilance: not only avoiding harm but actively fostering conditions where the herd can live meaningful, healthy lives as part of the Salt River community.

### **Principle 6: Decisions Informed by Expertise**

 Sound judgment requires the knowledge of experts in fields such as ecology, veterinary medicine, genetics, range science, and animal behavior. Wise choices grow out of evidence, not sentiment. Expertise provides the foundation for decisions that respect both the complexity of ecosystems and the lived reality of the herd. True stewardship also values community knowledge and traditional ecological wisdom, recognizing that both science and lived experience are essential for the herd's future.

### **Principle 7: Shared Responsibility**

 The horses are a cherished part of the Salt River and greater Phoenix community, and ensuring their

enduring presence is a shared moral duty among agencies, advocates, and the public. Their future depends on transparent decision-making, accountability, and shared responsibility among agencies, advocates, and the public.