

## Questions and Answers for the Nevada Wild Horse Range Wild Horse Gather

### ***Q. Why is this gather necessary?***

A. The bait/water gather is necessary to address emergency conditions within the Nevada Wild Horse Range HMA that threaten wild horse health and well-being, as well as crowding out wildlife that also compete for these limited resources. If a sufficient number of excess wild horses are not promptly removed from the area where water resources have become extremely limited, it is anticipated that individual wild horse body condition will continue to decline and that the most vulnerable horses -- mares and foals in particular -- will die.

In order to alleviate the competition for the limited water resources and prevent body condition decline and/or death of the most vulnerable horses, the BLM, SNDO has hauled water until an emergency gather operation could be conducted and approximately 125 excess wild horses removed from the Nevada Wild Horse Range. BLM has determined the situation within Nevada Wild Horse Range is an emergency situation because the area springs have either gone dry or produce only a trickle of water. The current water resources are insufficient for the overpopulation of wild horses residing within the NWHR. The situation is too extreme to be addressed through the normal gather cycle (BLM Handbook 4.7.2).

As well as prevent undue or unnecessary degradation of the public lands associated with excess wild horses, and to restore a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship on public lands, consistent with the provisions of Section 1333(b) of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. The BLM strives to be a good neighbor in the communities we serve, ensuring public safety on Nevada Test and Training Range is not at risk due to the overpopulation of wild horses and providing opportunities for other wildlife, such as pronghorn antelope and desert bighorn sheep, to have a thriving ecosystem.

The Nevada Wild Horse Range HMA is overpopulated and animal conditions are declining due to range degradation and lack of sustainable water resources. Regular monitoring has occurred in the complex to observe wild horse body condition and range and water conditions. Dependent on the location within Nevada Wild Horse Range HMA animals body conditions have been observed in the range of 1.5-4.

### ***Q. How many horses will be gathered and how many will be removed from the range?***

A. Total number of wild horses gathered in the Nevada Wild Horse Range: 125

Total number of wild horses removed in the Nevada Wild Horse Range: 125

The Nevada Wild Horse Range HMA is located within the boundaries of the Nevada Test and Training Range in Nye County, NV. The Nevada Test and Training Range was withdrawn from public use in 1940 and the Nevada Wild Horse Range HMA was established in 1962 by a Cooperative Agreement with the Commander, Nellis Air Force Base and the State Director, BLM.

### ***Q. What will the remaining herd population of this herd management area be?***

A. Total number of wild horses remaining in the Nevada Wild Horse Range: Approximately 676, not including the 2020 foal crop.

***Q. Is there livestock grazing in this area?***

A. No. Due to the restricted access of the Nevada Test and Training Range there has not been any livestock grazing on the Nevada Wild Horse Range HMA since before the 1960s.

***Q. Does the wild horse overpopulation impact wildlife and plants?***

A. Common wildlife species within the Nevada Wild Horse Range HMA include coyote, black-tail jackrabbit, desert cottontail, bobcat and numerous raptors, reptiles and other small mammal species. Mule deer, desert bighorn sheep, and pronghorn antelope are common big game species in the area. Currently, the overabundant population of wild horses is adversely affecting valuable habitat needed to support both native wildlife and wild horses.

With an Acceptable Management Level of 300-500 wild horses, the current population estimate of 801 wild horses, which does not include the 2020 foal crop, has strained the very limited water resources within the Nevada Wild Horse Range. This is also currently affecting the health of native wildlife found within Nevada Wild Horse Range, such as pronghorn antelope and bighorn sheep. On the Nevada Wild Horse Range, most of the waters within the boundaries of the range are either permanently dry or go dry seasonally. Wild horses are currently staying in the valley bottoms around limited waters and are travelling five to eight miles one way in search of forage. Horses are unable to travel outside the range boundary due to a perimeter security fence that surrounds the NTTR. This restricts them to using only resources found within the Nevada Wild Horse Range. Wild horses congregating on the developed water sources is limiting the access of the native wildlife and affecting their ability to meet their basic needs of water during the hot summers experienced on the Nevada Wild Horse Range. Forage resources within a 1-3 mile radius of the developed water resources are severely impacted due to the loitering of the excess wild horses, forcing both native wildlife and the wild horses to roam farther and farther in search of adequate forage. An emergency gather was last conducted in August of 2018, removing 800 animals. This emergency gather was conducted due to lack of water within the Nevada Wild Horse Range.

Wild horses often graze the same area repeatedly throughout the year. Forage plants in those areas receive little rest from grazing pressure. Continuous grazing by wild horses does not allow plants sufficient time to recover from grazing impacts. Such overgrazing results in reduced plant health, vigor, reproduction, and ultimately to a loss of native forage species from natural plant communities. Over time, this greatly diminishes habitat quality as abundance and long-term production of desired plant communities is compromised. If wild horse populations are not controlled in this area, forage utilization will exceed the capacity of the range.

***Q. What are some of the effects of wild horse overpopulation on Threatened and Endangered Species?***

A. Maintaining the existing wild horse over-population, which would increase with each successive foal crop, would result in continued and increasing impacts to threatened and endangered species populations and habitats. Wild horse populations would increase about 15-25% each year that a gather is postponed. Valley bottom habitats would continue to see locally heavy levels of utilization associated with wild horse use and areas of heavy use would continue to expand as wild horse populations continue to grow.

***Q. Will there be any designated public observers at the trap site?***

A. No. Due to the Nevada Wild Horse Range HMA being located within the boundaries of the Nevada Test and Training Range, no public access will be possible at the trap site.

***Q. What Contractor will be used for this Gather?***

A. Cattoor Livestock

***Q. How much will this gather cost?***

A. The costs for the gather will be calculated at the end of the gather.

***Q. How far, in relation to the trap site, are the horses and foals being herded?***

A. Since this gather is a bait/water trap gather no herding of the animals will occur.

***Q. What veterinary treatment will the removed horses receive?***

A. Once the horses arrive at the Ridgecrest Regional Wild Horse and Burro Corrals, the crew will allow the horses to acclimate to domestic feed and monitor them for a period of time. Following, the horses will be aged (based on the condition of their teeth), de-wormed, vaccinated, blood-tested (for Equine Infectious Anemia), and freeze-marked (marked with a cold brand).

***Q. Why is the BLM removing horses that appear to be or are in good condition?***

A. The BLM gathers horses with different body conditions, including some that appear to be or are in good condition. The agency pro-actively gathers excess animals from overpopulated herds on a three-to-five-year cycle to prevent worst-case scenarios.

***Q. Does the BLM use whips to move the horses through the pens and chute?***

A. The BLM may use flags or noise-making paddles to move horses through the pens and chutes. The flags are usually made by attaching a plastic grocery bag to the end of a sorting stick or buggy whip. The flag prevents the stick or whip from hitting the horse with any sort of impact or sting to it. Seeing and hearing the plastic flag motivates the animal to move away from the source of the stimulus. This technique is similar to those used for domestic and wild horses being trained using resistance-free methods.

***Q. Will the BLM implement any population suppression techniques? If so, what method or fertility control drug will be used and how many animals will be treated and released?***

A. No, this is an emergency gather based on lack of water therefore, all animals gathered will be removed.

***Q. Why is the BLM removing horses when, as of July 2020, there are already over 47,000 animals in holding?***

A. The BLM must remove thousands of wild horses and burros from the range each year to protect public lands from the environmental impacts of herd overpopulation – such as soil erosion, sedimentation of streams, and damage to wildlife habitat.

Although the BLM tries to place as many removed animals as possible into private care through adoption or sales, the public's demand for adoptable wild horses has declined sharply over the

last 10-plus years, leaving the federal agency in the unsustainable position of gathering excess horses while its holding costs spiral upward.

***Q. Where do the removed horses go?***

A. Excess wild horses, removed will be shipped to the Ridgecrest Regional Wild Horse and Burro Corrals, located in Ridgecrest, California, where they will be prepared for the BLM's adoption and sales programs or long-term holding facilities located in Midwestern pastures.

***Q. What happens to horses that are not adopted?***

A. Un-adopted horses are fed and cared for in either short-term corrals or long-term Midwestern pastures. Wild horses over 10 years old and those passed over for adoption at least three times become eligible for sale, a transaction in which the title of ownership to the animals passes immediately from the Federal government to the buyer. (In the adoption process, the title of ownership passes from the Federal government to the adopter after the individual provides one year of humane care.) While a December 2004 law granting the BLM sale authority authorizes the agency to sell sale-eligible animals "without limitation," the Bureau has not been and is not selling any wild horses to slaughterhouses or to "killer buyers." All horses in holding retain their status as "wild" animals and remain under the BLM's protection.

***Q. Will any of the horses be sent to slaughter?***

A. No. While a December 2004 amendment to the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act authorizes the BLM to sell sale-eligible animals "without limitation," the BLM has not been and is not selling any wild horses to slaughterhouses or to "killer buyers."

***Q. Where may I learn more about the Wild Horse and Burro Program?***

A. Please visit the BLM's website at <https://www.blm.gov/whb>