

## Questions & Answers

### Wild Horse Removal in the Checkerboard of the Great Divide, Adobe Town and Salt Wells Creek Herd Management Areas

August 2014

***Q. Why is this removal necessary?***

**A.** This removal is necessary to comply with a request from private land owners. Not removing wild horses in the checkerboard would result in non-compliance with Section 4 of the Wild Horse and Burro Act (WHBA), 16 U.S.C. 1334, its implementing regulations found at 43 CFR 4700 and the provisions of the court-ordered 2013 Consent Decree, which requires that all wild horses must be removed from checkerboard lands within the Great Divide Basin, Adobe Town and Salt Wells Creek herd management areas (HMAs).

***Q. What are the governing court cases?***

**A.** The checkerboard removal will fulfill the commitments in the 2013 Consent Decree (*Rock Springs Grazing Association v. Salazar* [Civil Action No. 11-CV-263-NDF]).

***Q. How many wild horses will be removed from the checkerboard?***

**A.** The projected number of wild horses to be removed from the checkerboard lands, based off the April 2014 census flights, is approximately 800-950 wild horses.

***Q. How many wild horses will be returned to the HMAs?***

**A.** None. As required by the 2013 Consent Decree, all wild horses will be removed from the checkerboard.

***Q. What is the AML for each of the three HMAs?***

**A.** This removal is a compliance action for the 2013 Consent Decree and Section 4 of the WFRHBA and is not a herd management action for the HMAs.

Under the existing RMPs, the AMLs are as follows:

Great Divide Basin: 415-600.

Salt Wells Creek: 251-365.

Adobe Town: 610-800.

***Q. Will the Rock Springs RMP need to be amended for the Consent Decree?***

**A.** The 2013 Consent Decree required the Rock Springs Field Office to conduct additional public scoping and analysis to address wild horse and burro management and numbers. The Consent Decree compliance will be included in the Rock Springs RMP/EIS and will amend the 2008 Rawlins RMP.

***Q. How many wild horses are in Wyoming?***

**A.** BLM Wyoming has 16 HMAs statewide. As of March 2014, Wyoming has an estimated wild horse population of 3,771. Wild horses will remain in the Great Divide Basin, Adobe Town and Salt Wells Creek HMAs after the removal of wild horses from the checkerboard.

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

**A.** Wild horses removed from the checkerboard will be shipped to short-term holding facilities located in Rock Springs, Wyoming, Cañon City, Colorado, and Gunnison, Utah, where they will be aged, dewormed, blood tested for Equine Infectious Anemia (known as EIA or Coggins Test), vaccinated, freeze marked and prepared for either the BLM's adoption program or long-term holding pastures in the Midwest. Some horses will be shipped to the Mantle Adoption and Training Facility in Wheatland, Wyoming, and the Wyoming Honor Farm in Riverton where they will be gentled in order to have a better chance of being adopted.

***Q. Is the BLM removing horses to make room for more cattle grazing?***

**A.** No. The removal of wild horses and burros is to comply with a request for removal of wild horses from private lands and the 2013 Consent Decree stipulating that all wild horses be removed from checkerboard lands.

***Q. Why is the BLM removing wild horses when there are already more than 47,000 mustangs in short-term corrals and long-term pastures?***

**A.** Removal of these wild horses from the checkerboard will ensure that the BLM honors its obligations set forth in the 2013 Consent Decree and respects the rights of private landowners to manage their lands as they deem appropriate.

The western range has a free-roaming population of more than 49,209 wild horses (as of March 1, 2014) exceeding by nearly 22,500 animals the number the BLM has determined can exist in balance with other public rangeland resources and uses. 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 in recent years, primarily due to the economy.

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

**A.** Unadopted horses are fed and cared for in either short-term corrals or long-term Midwestern pastures. Wild horses more than 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 animal 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 authorizes the BLM to sell sale-eligible animals "without limitation," the BLM will not sell 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 wild 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 does not sell any wild horses to slaughterhouses or to “killer buyers.”

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

**A.** The horses will be aged (based on the condition of their teeth), de-wormed, vaccinated, blood-tested and freeze marked (marked with a cold brand).

***Q. Will there be any public viewing opportunities?***

**A.** Yes. To view operations, contact Shelley Gregory at 307-315-0612 or [ssgregory@blm.gov](mailto:ssgregory@blm.gov) to add your name to the log. Ms. Gregory will coordinate with those on the log regarding where and when to meet to be escorted to the designated safety zone near the trap site located on public land. This will allow appropriate staffing for public viewing needs and also allow for instant notification if a trap site needs to be moved or removal operations suspended due to weather or logistics. The BLM will not arrange for any public viewing from private lands and private land owners have indicated that they will not grant access to the public.

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

**A.** The gather site locations have not been determined at this time; however, they are located to minimize the distance wild horses must be herded.

***Q. Why does BLM use helicopters to gather wild horses?***

**A.** Agencies were granted the authority to use helicopters with the passage of FLPMA in 1976 with the assumption that gathers could be conducted more efficiently and effectively. More importantly, the use of helicopters has proven to be more humane than other types of gather methods when large numbers of animals need to be removed over wide areas or rugged terrain. Helicopters are able to move horses and burros at a proper pace; moreover, helicopter pilots can keep mares and foals together better than a horseback rider and can also better move the animals around such barriers as deep ravines, fences or roads.

***Q. Why is the BLM allowing a federally indicted and convicted contractor to gather the horses?***

**A.** Mr. Dave Cattoor, a contractor who has gathered wild horses on behalf of the BLM since 1975, pled guilty to a misdemeanor count of “Use of Aircraft to Capture Wild Horses” on May 22, 1992. The incident occurred while his company was performing work on non-BLM lands for the Duckwater Indian Tribe in Nevada. Tribal members who were involved in the same legal

case were later found innocent of all charges stemming from the incident. Mr. Cattoor has met and continues to meet all pertinent federal regulations, which include certifying that no company employees have been convicted of animal cruelty charges. Mr. Cattoor's company has consistently demonstrated its ability to safely, effectively and humanely capture and handle wild horses and burros.

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

**A.** No. The BLM and gather contractors do not use whips. Flags or noise-making paddles are used 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. Where may I learn more about the Wild Horse and Burro Program?***

**A.** Please visit the BLM's website at [www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Wild\\_Horses.html](http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Wild_Horses.html) or Google "BLM Wyoming wild horses."