

Selective Removal Criteria- Selective Removals target specific classes of wild horses. Maintaining appropriate age structure and genetic diversity should also be considered for the long-term management of wild horse populations. As explained in BLM Manual 4720, selective removals should be conducted in accordance with approved Herd Management Area Plans (HMAPs) or other planning documents that identify the site-specific removal or release criteria for the HMA or complex of HMAs. In the absence of site-specific selective removal criteria, gathers for all wild horse herds should be conducted in accordance with the following criteria (these criteria are not applicable to wild burros). Unless the gather is part of an emergency, any wild horses (particularly females) gathered but not removed as excess and thus returned to the HMA should be treated with population growth suppression.

The priorities for selective removals are identified below:¹

- (1) **First Priority: Age Class, Six Years and Younger** – Wild horses 6 years of age and younger are the **first** priority for removal and placement into the adoption program.
- (2) **Second Priority: Age Class, Eleven to Nineteen Years** – Wild horses aged 11 to 19 years of age are the **second** priority for removal from the HMA only if management goals and objectives for the herd cannot be achieved by removing younger horses, or if specific management exceptions prevent them from being released back to the HMA.
- (3) **Third Priority: Age Class, Seven to Ten Years** – Wild horses 7 to 10 years of age are the **third** priority for removal.
- (4) **Fourth Priority: Age Class, Twenty Years and Older** – Wild horses aged 20 years and older should not be removed from the HMA, unless specific management exceptions prevent them from being released back to the HMA.

Occasionally, national funding and holding space limitations, as well as national program priorities, may require exceptions to the selective removal age criteria to achieve management objectives (i.e., support of adoption market or research). Additionally, selective removal priorities can be modified when necessary to account for genetic diversity and population growth suppression management goals within an HMA.

¹ In IM 2010-135, wild horses up to 4-years-old were the first priority for removal, whereas wild horses that are 5 and 6 years old were third priority for removal. In the intervening years, the BLM has determined that a private care placement demand exists for 5- and 6-year-old horses. Accordingly, the BLM has modified the removal priorities identified in IM 2010-135 to account for that private care placement demand.