

Questions and Answers for the FY2023 Desatoya HMA Wild Horse Gather

Q. What is the official name for this gather?

A. 2023 Desatoya HMA Wild Horse Gather

Q. Where and how will we know when to go and where to meet each day?

A. The Stillwater Field Office plans to schedule daily public visitation which may not include the holding corrals. Members of the public are welcome to view the gather operations, provided that doing so does not jeopardize the safety of the animals, staff and observers, or disrupt gather operations.

All media and/or visitors wanting to go to the gather site the following day will need to call the Desatoya Wild Horse Gather information hotline nightly no later than 5:00 p.m. at (775) 885-6101 to **RSVP**. The meeting time and location will be available by calling the hotline. **If no RSVPs are received by 5:00 p.m., no public viewing will be available the following day.**

The BLM plans to meet the public in Middle Gate, Nevada to escort visitors to the gather. This location is subject to change. The “What to Know before You Go” information and “Visitation Protocol and Ground Rules” are posted on the BLM’s FY2023 Desatoya HMA gather page at <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/herd-management/gathers-and-removals/nevada> under the 2023 Desatoya HMA Gather Page, so observers are adequately prepared for the conditions at the gather sites and rules while observing the gather operations. Visitation is expected to allow opportunities for photographs and “questions and answers”.

Q. What Contractor will be used for this Gather?

A. A Rocking Livestock Inc. out of Lehi, Utah

Q. How much will this gather cost?

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

Q. Why is this gather necessary?

A. 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 within and outside of the HMAs is not at risk due to the overpopulation of wild horses and providing opportunities for other wildlife to have a thriving ecosystem.

Regular monitoring has occurred in the complex to observe wild horse body condition and range and water conditions. Dependent on the location within Desatoya HMA animals body conditions have been observed in the range of 3-6.

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

A. The BLM will gather up to 122 wild horses and remove up to 24 excess wild horses.

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. Yes, 49 mares will be treated with GonaCon Equine and released back to the range along with up to 49 stallions.

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

A. BLM Nevada that there will be an estimated population of approximately 128 wild horses.

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

A. BLM Nevada's operation plan is no more than eight to ten miles.

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

A. The BLM gathers animals 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 to ensure the animals are within the appropriate management level or working towards achieving the appropriate management level. Once the gather is complete, the Desatoya HMA will be within the appropriate management level thus achieving the goal of "healthy horses and healthy rangelands" in balance with all other uses under the multi-use mandate of the BLM.

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

A. No - The BLM may use flags or noise-making paddles to move animals 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 animal 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 animals being trained using resistance-free methods.

Q. Why is the BLM removing animals when, as of July 2023, there are already over 58,000 animals in holding?

A. The BLM must remove thousands of wild horses 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 animals go?

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

Q. What veterinary treatment will the removed animals receive?

A. Once the animals arrive at the Palomino Valley Off-Range Corrals, the crew will allow them to acclimate to domestic feed and monitor them. Following, the animals will be aged (based on

the condition of their teeth), de-wormed, vaccinated, blood-tested (for Equine Infectious Anemia), freeze-marked (marked with a cold brand) and stallions will be gelded.

Q. What happens to animals that are not adopted?

A. Un-adopted animals are fed and cared for in either short-term corrals or long-term Midwestern pastures. Animals, usually 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.)

Q. Will any of the animals be sent to slaughter?

A. No. 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 and burros to slaughterhouses or to "killer buyers."** All animals in holding retain their status as “wild” animals and remain under the BLM’s protection.

Q. Is there any livestock grazing in this area?

A. Yes, the HMA falls within the Edwards Creek Grazing Allotment, Cold Springs pasture of the Clan Alpine Grazing Allotment, Porter Canyon Grazing Allotment, and South Smith Creek Grazing Allotment.

Table 1-1 Appropriate Management Levels for the HMA By Grazing Allotment (not by use – this is calculated at the end of the year and reported annually through the Rangeland program)

| HMA Allotment(s) | AML | % of HMA | % of Allot. | MUD date |
|-------------------|---------|----------|-------------|----------|
| Clan Alpine | 32-43 | 5 | 2 | 1992 |
| Edwards Creek | 41-55 | 8 | 24 | 1992 |
| South Smith Creek | 9-15 | 14 | 23 | 1999 |
| Porter Canyon | 45-67 | 70 | 81 | 1999 |
| | | | | |
| Total | 127-180 | | | |

NOTE: Livestock use complies with the grazing system outlined in the final multiple use decisions, agreements and term permit conditions that provide for periodic rest and deferral of key range sites

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

A. No. The BLM carries out removal of wild horses from public rangelands to ensure rangeland health and in accordance with land-use plans that were developed in an open, public process. These land-use plans are the means by which the BLM carries out its core mission, which is to manage the land for multiple uses while protecting the land’s resources. Authorized livestock grazing on BLM-administered lands has declined by nearly 50-percent since the 1940s;

actual (as distinguished from authorized) livestock grazing on public rangelands has declined by 30-percent since 1971.

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

A. Common wildlife species within the Desatoya HMA include habitat for Lahontan cutthroat trout (a threatened species). Overuse of riparian areas and creeks causes erosion and loss of native vegetation, which leads to a decrease in water quality that can adversely affect Lahontan cutthroat trout and other aquatic species.

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 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. 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>