

**Bureau of Land Management Responses to  
National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Recommendations  
from the September 2016 Meeting in Elko, Nevada**

**Presented to the Advisory Board at the October 2018 Meeting in Salt Lake City**

**Recommendation #1:** BLM should follow stipulations of Wild Horse and Burro Act by offering all suitable animals in long and short-term holding deemed unadoptable for sale without limitation or humane euthanasia. Those animals deemed unsuitable for sale should then be destroyed in the most humane manner possible.—Approved

**RESPONSE:** Congress includes in the annual appropriations bill that “*Appropriations herein made shall not be available for the destruction of healthy, unadopted, wild horses and burros in the care of the Bureau or its contractors or for the sale of wild horses and burros that results in their destruction for processing into commercial products.*” With or without the prohibition, one of BLM’s top priorities will continue to be the placement of animals into private care through adoptions and sales, and transfer animals to other federal, state, and local agencies.

**Recommendation #2:** BLM should prioritize designated sage grouse habitat for removal of excess animals. BLM should use degree of range degradation as a criterion for prioritization for removal of excess animals i.e., consideration should be given to those rangelands that can be restored and maintained in a healthy status.—Approved

**RESPONSE:** Gather priorities are based on the following criteria: compliance with court orders, public safety and protection of private property, priority habitats for threatened/endangered and sensitive species (including greater sage-grouse), initiation of research, and to achieve appropriate management levels in HMAs. In FY 2018, the BLM will have removed over 10,000 animals of which approximately 5,000 are in HMA’s that overlap priority sage-grouse habitat. The BLM directed \$4.15 million of sage-grouse habitat improvement funds specifically to remove excess horses in areas where they were impacting priority sage-grouse habitat.

**Recommendation #3:** BLM should develop partnerships with economic agencies and or departments to conduct an analysis of socioeconomic and environmental effects on communities with reduced AUMs on HMAs due to range degradation resulting from overpopulation of wild horses and/or burros. Further analysis should be conducted regarding the effects of the potential removal of all domestic livestock from all HMAs.—Approved

**RESPONSE:** The BLM is not prepared to fund this without outside help. The BLM recognizes that other uses of public lands such as recreation (including public viewing of wild horses and burros), energy development, permitted livestock grazing and the presence of wild horse and burro herds all contribute to the economic viability of western communities and the national economy. The BLM also recognizes that a decline in the health and productivity of rangelands negatively affects the resources that the economies of many rural western communities depend upon.

**Recommendation #4:** BLM should encourage BLM Resource Advisory Councils (RACs) to develop and submit for consideration their ideas for herd management and range rehabilitation strategies tailored to their specific areas and HMAs based on local knowledge and expertise.—Approved

**RESPONSE:** Several RACs have a keen interest in wild horse and burro management. The BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program will prepare and transmit a letter to the RACs representing areas where wild horses and burros are present and ask for their insight into herd and rangeland management strategies, including suggestions for partnership opportunities with local, State and national organizations.

**Recommendation #5:** BLM should advertise and conduct more frequent adoption events at off-range corrals to enable more horses & burros to reach sale eligible status.—Approved

**RESPONSE:** In calendar year 2018, the BLM will hold a total of 96 adoption events ([www.blm.gov/whb](http://www.blm.gov/whb)) to be held in numerous states. Of these events, 39 will be held at BLM off-range corrals. For example, the BLM's Pauls Valley (OK) off-range facility holds monthly adoption events on the second Tuesday of the month. The BLM has also begun to implement internet adoptions through the on-line corral system. Through this system the public has a wider range of animals to select from for adoption. Adoption events at other facilities and events across the country allows more people an opportunity to adopt animals without having to travel to BLM facilities which are primarily located in the west.

**Recommendation #6:** BLM should facilitate invitation to all Board members to attend spay trials when they might occur, if allowed by protocols governing the trial.—Approved

**RESPONSE:** Spay research is currently being proposed for a gather in Oregon at the Warm Springs HMA in fall 2018. BLM intends to contract for veterinary services to spay approximately 100 mares using the ovariectomy via colpotomy technique. It is the BLM's intention to be transparent and allow public viewing of the surgeries, while at the same time to be prudent and consider the nature of the research and protecting the veterinarians and the health of the animals. There are no special provisions in the Warm Springs HMA Environmental Assessment that would give preferential access to board members for viewing, but board members are certainly allowed and encouraged to join the public viewing.

**Recommendation #7 (Repeat from last meeting):** BLM should continue to work toward full implementation of previously accepted recommendations of the Board and prioritize according to BLM matrix of meeting AML. Note: This is the first recommendation from the Board's April 13-14, 2016 meeting.—Approved

**RESPONSE:** The BLM is working towards the implementation of accepted recommendations from previous meetings within the limitations of available resources (staffing and budgetary) and other influencing factors. Priority work includes reducing off-range holding costs, increasing the number of trained animals offered for adoption, increasing animal availability to adopters through new "storefronts" with more emphasis

in the east, continuing research to develop more effective contraceptive methods, and managing HMAs to achieve and maintain AML.