



# United States Department of the Interior

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MANAGEMENT

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## **Common Questions and Answers for the Kiger and Riddle Mountain Herd Management Areas Wild Horse Gather**

### **These horses are being gathered too near the foaling season. Can the gather be delayed?**

The peak of foaling for wild horse herds on public lands in the West falls within about a two week period, from mid-April to mid-May. It is the BLM's policy (BLM Manual 4720.41) to prohibit the use of helicopters to assist in the capture of wild horses the six weeks before and the six weeks that follow the peak of foaling. Therefore, the use of helicopters to capture wild horses is prohibited from March 1 until June 30, unless an emergency situation occurs. By August, foals are generally big enough to safely travel to a capture site. Due to the fact that some foals may birth outside of the foaling period, and because there are many herds in the western United States to gather each year, there simply isn't a time to complete a gather that will avoid all foals.

### **Can the mare/foal pairs and heavily pregnant mares be excluded from this gather?**

BLM employees have observed horses in the Herd Management Area recently and are aware of the younger foals and pregnant mares. Mare/foal pairs and pregnant mares will be included in the gather. The agency and the contractor take every precaution in providing for the safe travel of these, and all horses during the gather process. Each situation is evaluated case-by-case to determine whether or not the horse(s) is capable of and willing to make the journey. If the mare/foal pairs or pregnant mares are not, they will be separated from the group.

### **How far will the horses travel to the capture site?**

Most capture sites in the Kiger/Riddle Mountain gather are 1-6 miles from the majority of the horses in that particular area. The agency and the contractor use as many capture sites as necessary to provide the shortest and easiest travel distances and routes. The Herd Management Area is quite small and this time of year, the horses are regularly reported to be gathering in larger groups of multiple bands in the lowlands. These circumstances make it easier and more efficient to move the horses a shorter distance to a capture site.

### **Will there be a viewing opportunity at every capture site?**

There will be viewing at capture sites that allow for a safe opportunity for the horses, public, BLM employees, contractors and crew, and the gather operation. Federal Aviation Requirements will be a determining factor in the location and/or availability of observation sites.

**Will there be observation at the temporary holding facility?**

If there is a temporary holding facility in the field, viewing will be available at a location determined safe and undistruptive by the contractor.

**I have concerns about the genetic variability of the Kiger and Riddle herds. It seems there are two few animals left on the range to assure healthy reproduction.**

Concerns have surfaced concerning the genetic variability of the Kiger / Riddle Herd Management Areas (HMA's). While there are many opinions concerning the minimum number of animals needed to ensure sufficient genetic variability they are usually associated with isolated populations of animals that are not managed as part of a larger population of animals. The Kiger / Riddle HMA's are managed by retaining or releasing the best animals in the HMA following a gather. Hair samples are collected for genetic testing at every gather. BLM is compiling baseline genetic data for all HMA's including the Kiger / Riddle HMA's. If concerns with genetic variability are identified we can address them by moving similar animals into the HMA from other HMA's that meet our management criteria. Historically, in Oregon this has been done very successfully with our best animals to ensure that genetic variability is conserved.

When the Wild Horse and Burro Act (WH&B Act) was passed in 1971 it mandated that the BLM would manage wild horses and burros where they existed at the time of the passage of the ACT. Establishment of the HMA's was defined by where they existed at the times the Act was passed. Appropriate management level (AML) is determined through land use planning efforts that consider multiple land uses in balance with the productive capacity of the range. Some herds were established in areas that could not support a minimum number of 100 or 150 herds. If horses are going to be managed in these areas they need to be managed at these lower AML numbers.

The Bureau monitors genetic variability in all of the HMA's as a standard management practice. While we would also like some HMA's to be bigger we are bound by the WH&B Act and the constraints of the available resources. This is an important part of protecting the health and well-being of the horses on the range. If problems arise due to smaller numbers of animals in some HMA's they can be addressed in the same manner that created these herds, by moving horses from one HMA to another. This will protect the genetic variability and maintain the production of superior animals that are valued by the BLM and the public.

*\*last updated June 26, 2015*