

Questions and Answers for the FY2022 Destoya Wild Horse Gather

Q. What is the official name for this gather?

A. FY2022 Desatoya Wild Horse Gather

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

A. Visitors to the gather, including all media and members of the public, must **RSVP** by calling (775) 885-6101 – **you must make your reservation by 5:00 p.m. the night before you intend to visit the gather activities.** If you have RSVP'd, no later than 5:00 p.m. the night before, you will receive a call back on meeting time and location no later than 9 p.m. that evening. **If no RSVPs are received by 5:00 p.m., no public viewing will be available the following day.**

Q. Will there be any designated public observers at the gather site locations?

A. Yes.

BLM staff will meet the public who have RSVP'd on the previous day the following morning at a specified location and time to escort them to the gather site. Limitations will only be imposed to ensure safety and accomplishment of the mission. The "Visitation Protocol", "Know Before You Go", "Q and A's" and "Map" handouts will also be posted on the BLM website, so observers are adequately prepared for the conditions on the gather sites.

Q. What Contractor will be used for this Gather?

A Cattoor Livestock Inc. out of Nephi, 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.

The purpose of the gather is critical to prevent undue or unnecessary degradation of the public lands associated with excess wild horses, and 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/burros and Burros Act.

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

A. The BLM will gather up to 223 excess wild horses and remove up to 150 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, GonaCon; the BLM will treat and release up to approximately 43 mares after holding the mares for 30-days to give them each a booster following the initial vaccine.

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

A. Approximately 127 horses.

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

A. No more than 8 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 good condition. The agency pro-actively gathers excess animals from overpopulated herds on a three-to-five-year cycle to prevent worst-case scenarios.

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 like those used for domestic animals being trained using resistance-free methods.

Q. Why is the BLM removing animals when, as of November 2021, 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.

In the case of the Desatoya, excess animals exist outside the HMAs, and the gather is needed not only to ensure balance on the range and reversal of downward trends, but to also conform to the directives in the Handbooks and guidance from Resource Advisory Council.

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 Center 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 Center, the crew will allow them to acclimate to domestic feed and monitor them for a period of time. 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 “kill 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 Desatoya Mountains HMA includes portions of four livestock grazing allotments. Livestock use is in compliance with the grazing system outlined in the final multiple use decisions, agreements and term permit conditions that provide for periodic rest and deferment 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 lands to ensure public land health and in accordance with land-use plans that were developed in an open, public process. These land-use plans direct how 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 lands has declined by 30-percent since 1971.

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

A. Common wildlife species within the HMA include coyote, black-tail jackrabbit, desert cottontail, bobcat and numerous raptors, reptiles and other small mammal species. Mule deer, Pronghorn antelope, and Bighorn sheep are common big game species in the area. Also, within this HMA are Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT) which are a federally protected species. The HMA also contains priority habitat for the Greater sage-grouse. At present there are numerous riparian restoration projects being implemented, to stabilize and increase Greater sage-grouse and other wildlife populations, where the success of these projects is threatened by horse overpopulation. Currently, the overabundant population of wild horses is adversely affecting valuable habitat needed to support both wildlife and wild horses.

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.

The HMA overlaps the Desatoya and Reese River sage grouse population management units and the Desatoya Wilderness Study Area. The Desatoya HMA consists of approximately 69% of the estimated 230,000 acres of the Habitat Resiliency, Health, and Restoration Project area.

Q. What are some of the effects of wild horse overpopulation on Threatened and Endangered Species?

A. Maintaining the existing wild horse over-population, which will increase with each successive foal crop and results in continued and increasing impacts to threatened and endangered species populations and habitats. Wild horse populations increase about 15-25% each year that a gather is postponed. Upland habitats will continue to see locally heavy levels of utilization associated with wild horse use, and these areas of heavy use will continue to expand as wild horse populations continue to grow. Upland wild horse use increases erosion which adversely affect the water quality of Lahontan Cutthroat Trout streams. Continued heavy grazing also occurs on spring meadow systems and creeks, adversely affecting Lahontan Cutthroat Trout which is federally listed.

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>