

Questions and Answers for the Eagle Emergency Wild Horse Gather

Q. Why is this gather necessary?

A. There is not enough water to support the number of wild horses in the northern portion of the Eagle Herd Management Area (HMA). Wild horses are traveling outside the HMA boundary in search of resources. The purpose of the gather is 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 and Burros Act. The BLM strives to be a good neighbor in the communities we serve, ensuring public safety within and outside of the Eagle HMA is not at risk due to the overpopulation of wild horses and providing opportunities for other wildlife, such as pronghorn antelope and Elk, to have a thriving ecosystem.

Q. What is the population estimate/ Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the Eagle HMA?

A. Appropriate management level for the Eagle HMA is 100-210 wild horses. The current population estimate is 1,859 wild horses.

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

A. The BLM will gather and remove approximately 300 wild horses. Approximately 1,559 wild horses will remain in the Eagle HMA once the gather is completed.

Q. Is there livestock grazing in this area?

A. Yes, livestock grazing occurs throughout the Eagle HMA.

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

A. 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 the 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. Why is the BLM removing horses when there are already nearly 46,000 animals in holding?

A. The BLM must remove thousands of wild horses and burros 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+ years, leaving the agency in the unsustainable position of gathering excess horses while its holding costs spiral upward.

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 the BLM removing horses that appear to be or are in good condition?

A. The BLM gathers horses 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.

Q. Where do the removed horses go?

A. Excess wild horses removed from the range will be shipped to the Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center where they will be prepared for the BLM's adoption program or long-term holding in Midwestern pastures.

Q. What happens to horses that are not adopted?

A. Un-adopted horses are fed and cared for in either short-term corrals or long-term Midwestern pastures. Wild horses 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.) 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 to slaughterhouses or to "killer buyers."** All horses in holding retain their status as "wild" animals and remain under the BLM's protection.

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

A. No. While a December 2004 amendment to the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act authorizes the BLM to sell sale-eligible animals "without limitation," the BLM has **not been and is not selling any wild horses to slaughterhouses or to "killer buyers."**

Q. What veterinary treatment will the removed horses receive?

A. The horses will be aged (based on the condition of their teeth), de-wormed, vaccinated, blood-tested, and freeze-marked (marked with a cold brand).

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

A. Yes. Due to private property access issues, some public viewing may be limited. A PAO and a LEO will meet the public each morning at a specified location to escort them to the gather sites. Limitations will only be imposed to ensure safety and accomplishment of the mission. A "Know Before You Go" handout will also be posted on the BLM website so observers are adequately prepared for the conditions on the gather sites.

All visitors will be encouraged to sign-up for gather operations by calling the gather hotline number and leaving a message at 775-861-6700 (Wild Horse Gather Information Line).

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

A. That will be determined by the COR and the contractor but varies depending on health of the animals, terrain and weather.

Q. What Contractor will be used for this Gather?

A. Sun J Livestock, Inc., of Vernal, Utah.

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

A. The BLM uses flags or noise-making paddles to move horses 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 horse 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 and wild horses being trained using resistance-free methods.

Q. Where may I learn more about the Wild Horse and Burro Program?

A. Please visit the BLM's website at www.blm.gov/whb