

Off-Range Pasture FAQs



Updated 10/14/16

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1. Why does the BLM have Off-Range Pasture contracts?

The general purpose of the contracts are to continue the maintenance of the federally protected animals, removed from Western public lands, in pastures large enough to allow for a free-roaming behavior. Off-Range pastures (ORPs) are more cost-effective than the Off-Range Corrals (ORCs) that hold wild horses removed from the range until they are placed into private care or shipped to ORPs. As of August 2016, nearly 46,000 animals were cared for in ORCs, ORPs, and Eco-Sanctuaries.

The free-roaming population of BLM-managed wild horses and burros is estimated to be 67,027, as of March, 2016, which exceeds by more than 40,000 the number determined by the BLM to be the appropriate management level. Despite the BLM's best efforts to use current population growth-suppression (PGS) measures, it is not enough to prevent the population from doubling every four years. In response to increasing population numbers, the BLM is supporting new research to improve existing and develop new PGS measures.

The result of the rising population numbers is stress on the land, wild horses and burros, and other species competing for the same resources; therefore, the ORPs are a major component in controlling feed and care costs.

2. Why does the BLM continue to remove animals from the range?

Under the authority of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, as amended, the BLM manages and protects wild horses and burros on western public lands while working to ensure that population levels are in balance with other public rangeland resources and uses. The BLM removes animals from the range to control the size of herds, which have virtually no predators and double in population every four years. The BLM plans to remove from the range about the same number of animals for which private care can be found each year.

3. What are the general requirements for an ORP contract?

- ✓ Provide all necessary land, food, water, facilities, personnel and supplies necessary to maintain a minimum of 200 wild horses in good condition yearlong.
- ✓ Pastures, or combination of pastures, shall be sufficient in size to allow horses a free-roaming environment and allow for natural hoof trimming.
- ✓ Supplemental feeding may need to occur for a period up to 4 months.
- ✓ Provide weekly monitoring of the animals to assess their health and determine death loss.

- ✓ Provide humane care for a one-year period, with a renewal option under BLM contract for a four-year or nine-year period. *(EX) Proposal will ask you to request a five-year or 10-year term contract.*

4. Can the land be located in any state and qualify for the ORP solicitation?

Proposals will only be accepted if the land is located in one of the following states: Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon (excluding west of the Cascade Mountain Range, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington (excluding west of the Cascade Mountain Range, and Wyoming.

Historically, the states in the Great Plains Region have a higher chance of meeting the targeted specifications for the contract.

5. Where do I locate an ORP solicitation?

- ✓ Go to www.fedconnect.net and click on *Search Public Opportunities*
- ✓ Visit BLM.GOV/WHB and look under funding opportunities

6. Is there specific information that must be included in the proposal?

Yes. Refer to the General Services section of the solicitation for a complete list of the contract requirements. A summary of the requirements are shown below.

- ✓ Provide land, forage, salt, minerals, water, and fences necessary to properly care for and maintain a minimum of 200 up to a maximum of 5,000 wild horses, based on the applicant's carrying capacity. Must have sufficient rock and soil type to maintain proper hoof size and shape without trimming.
- ✓ Pastures, or combination of pastures, shall be sufficient in size to allow horses to continue their free-roaming behavior and allow for natural hoof trimming. ***BLM does NOT list a requirement for the number of acres needed per animal because each location will vary. The proposal must provide supporting documentation to illustrate that the proposed pastures can carry the number of animals requested in the proposal.***
- ✓ Pastures must be capable of producing sufficient standing forage for a period of at least 8 months or longer. Contractor must also provide supplemental feed as necessary to maintain the horses in good condition (i.e. during periods of drought, deep snow, ice storms, fire, during times when the forage is depleted of protein content or when other circumstances warrant).

- ✓ Perimeter and division fences shall be at least four strands of barbed wire, a minimum of 48” in height, and completely enclose the ORP. In some areas, wildlife-friendly fences will need to be constructed. The one constant is that the height of the fencing shall not be any lower than 48”. Gates, rather than cattle guards, should be used at all road crossings or fence openings to keep horses in pastures.
- ✓ Provide corrals and adequate facilities to load and unload wild horses on an as-needed basis.
- ✓ Pastures cannot have a tree canopy cover that prevents desirable forage species from growing or a canopy cover which prevents the contractor and the BLM from obtaining an accurate monthly inventory of horses at the off-range pasture.
- ✓ All land that is included in the proposal must be privately owned lands owned by the applicant or controlled by the applicant for a period of time no less than the contract period. The offered lands cannot include unfenced public lands; therefore, *Forest Service or BLM lands may NOT be included* in the proposal. If any unfenced public lands are located within the privately owned or controlled lands, the public lands must be fenced out.

Contact your [Natural Resources Conservation Service Center](#) for assistance with determining your stocking rate and your soil and water type.

7. How many ORP contracts will be awarded?

The BLM expects to award several contracts; however, the total number of contracts awarded will be based on the number of acceptable proposals received and number of animals each proposal can accommodate to meet the BLM’s needs.

8. What does the BLM pay a contractor to hold horses on an ORP?

The applicant must submit a business plan that supports the dollar amount needed per head/day to conduct business with the government. The bid should include the percentage of profit the contractor is seeking. The BLM cannot provide a suggested rate.

9. Will the BLM visit my property before making a decision?

Yes. If a proposal meets the BLM’s needs, several BLM technical experts will complete an on-site visit before making a final recommendation to award a contract. Additionally, throughout

the contract's period of performance, a BLM contract specialist will be the contractor's immediate point of contact and will closely monitor the contractor's performance for compliance.

10. If awarded a contract, when would BLM begin shipping horses? Are genders mixed?

The BLM ships animals to a facility only after the offered property meets the minimum requirements outlined in the contract specifications, together with any mitigation or additional requirements identified in the BLM's Environmental Assessment, and contract is awarded.

Horses are typically shipped 34-36 animals at a time using a semi-truck and trailer. Contractor must be able to offload horses using a loading chute. Each awarded contract will receive all mares or all geldings. The BLM does not ship a mix of genders to any contractor to reduce the chance of any additional animals born in captivity.

All wild horses that go to ORPs live in non-reproducing herds. Prior to shipment, all males are gelded. The mares and geldings are kept in separate pasture contracts to prevent possible reproduction. If mares are pregnant upon arrival, they will foal in the large off-range pastures. After the foals are weaned, they are shipped to off-range corrals for placement in the adoption program.

11. Do the animals receive health care prior to shipping to ORPs?

Yes. When wild horses are first removed from the range, they are shipped to an ORC for an overall health inspection by a veterinarian. They are also vaccinated, dewormed, freeze marked, tested for coggins, and aged. If wild horses are shipped from an ORC to an ORP, a four-digit hip freeze mark is put on the horse's hip to assist in visual tracking by the BLM compliance inspectors and contractors. A health and gather history is created for each animal.

12. Does the contractor provide health care to the wild horses?

In the event a wild horse is observed to have a health issue, unless it is impacting the quality of life, the BLM expects the contractor to leave the horse alone to heal naturally as it does in the wild. In the case of a health issue that impacts the animal's quality of life, the animal will be evaluated consistent with BLM policy.

13. What is the life expectancy of wild horses living on ORPs?

The horses may live up to 30-plus years of age. Wild horses that are six years old or older may live out the rest of their lives on an ORP.

14. What is the payment timeframe for an ORP contractor?

First payment will be made after animals are received at the ORP and have resided there for one month. Each contractor MUST keep track of the number of horses on their ORP and invoice the BLM once a month. On an annual basis, at a minimum, BLM and contractor will conduct a joint animal inventory.

15. How many ORPs are currently under contract with the BLM?

The BLM has more than 25 ORPs ranging in size from 1,000 acres up to 35,000 acres; the average size is 20,000 acres. There are no ORPs for wild burros.

16. How can I learn about future ORP solicitations?

The BLM posts all solicitations on www.fbo.gov and www.fedconnect.net. Once a solicitation is posted, a press release/announcement is posted at www.blm.gov/whb and through media outlets. Advertising is procured based on budget availability.

In addition, you may contact a Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) in your state to assist you with future notifications from any government agency. You can reach them by calling (615)268-6644 or visiting <http://www.aptac-us.org/>

17. Were the wild horses located at the Mission Ridge ORP moved to a new South Dakota location?

Yes. The contractor for the Mission Ridge ORP, Spur Livestock, lost their lease and secured a new ORP lease near Vale, South Dakota. The ORP consists of 33,500 +/- private acres, 22 separate pastures, which allows for 33 acres/horse. The new ORP has a carrying capacity of 1,022 and will open with 917 wild horses.