

Off-Range Pasture Solicitation FAQs

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Why does the BLM have off-range pastures?

Under the authority of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages and protects wild horses and burros while working to ensure that population levels are in balance with other public rangeland resources and uses. Wild horses and burros have virtually no natural predators and can double in population every four years.

The current free-roaming population of BLM-managed wild horses and burros is estimated to be 95,000, as of March 1, 2020, which is approximately triple the number determined by BLM to be the appropriate management level. The BLM is using population growth-suppression (PGS) measures, and is supporting research to improve existing and develop new PGS tools. There are currently about 37,500 wild horses being cared for in off-range pastures.

What is an off-range pasture solicitation?

An off-range pasture solicitation is the mechanism used by the BLM to request interested parties to submit a proposal that demonstrates they can provide a free-roaming environment for wild horses removed from Western public lands. If the proposal is accepted, a contract may be awarded to do business with the Federal government, in this case the BLM.

What are the general requirements for an off-range pasture contract?

The general purpose of the contract is to continue the maintenance of the federally protected animals, removed from Western public lands, in pastures large enough to allow free-roaming behavior. To meet the general requirements of the contract, the contractor shall provide all necessary land, food, water, facilities, personnel and supplies necessary to maintain the wild horses in good condition. The contractor must provide humane care for a one-year period, with a renewal option under BLM contract for a four-year or nine-year period. The BLM may require one or two public and/or media tours hosted by BLM staff and the contractor during the life of the contract.

Which states can apply to the current off-range pasture solicitation?

The exact geographic area of consideration will be specified in the posted solicitation. Proposals from outside the defined area will not be considered.

What are the steps in applying to an off-range pasture solicitation?

Applicants who have never conducted business with the government must first obtain a Duns and Bradstreet number at www.dnb.com before registering at www.sam.gov/ to complete the initial process. The System for Award Management (SAM) is the official U.S. government system that consolidated the capabilities of Central Contractor Registration (CCR), Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA), and Excluded Parties List System (EPLS). There is no fee involved for either step. Once both steps are completed, you are ready to apply to the solicitation.

Where do I locate the off-range pasture solicitation?

Go to www.beta.sam.gov;

Scroll down under Contract Opportunities (FBO) and click "Search Contract Opportunities";

Enter the solicitation number in the "Keywords" field and hit Enter.

Applicants who are new to conducting business with the government must first obtain a Duns and Bradstreet number at www.dnb.com and then register at www.sam.gov to respond to the solicitation. No fee is involved. The solicitation describes what to submit to the BLM, where to send it and the deadline for submission. You may contact a Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) in your state to assist you with the solicitation. You can reach them by calling (615)268-6644 or visiting www.aptac-us.org

What are some of the specific requirements that must be met for consideration?

Provide land, forage, salt, minerals, water, and fences necessary to properly care for and maintain at least the minimum but not more than the maximum number of wild horses specified in the solicitation.

Pastures, or combination of pastures, shall be of sufficient size to allow horse's freedom of movement and the ability to exercise for good health, natural hoof trimming, and to continue their free-roaming behavior.

Pastures must be capable of producing sufficient standing forage for a period of at least 8 months or longer. Supplemental feeding may need to occur for a period of up to 4 months. 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).

Pastures should have sufficient rock and soil type to maintain proper hoof size and shape without trimming. In situations where pastures do not have sufficient rock and soil type, horses will have to have their feet trimmed by the contractor (a chute will be provided).

Perimeter fences shall be a minimum of 48" in height and completely enclose the facility and shall be of barbed wire. All division fences shall consist of four strands of barbed wire or other acceptable fencing materials. In some areas, wildlife-friendly fences will need to be constructed. The need for modification of any existing fences or the construction of any new fences to meet wildlife-friendly guidelines will be identified as mitigation during the BLM's Environmental Assessment (EA) process. 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.

Any land that is included in the proposal must be privately owned lands owned by the offeror or controlled by the offeror 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.

Refer to "General Services" section of the solicitation for a complete list of the requirements.

Is there anyone that can assist me in developing the proposal?

You can contact the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) for your state which you can find on the Internet.

How many off-range pasture contracts will be awarded?

The BLM could award several contracts depending on the number of acceptable proposals received and number of animals each proposal can accommodate to meet the BLM's needs.

What does the BLM pay a contractor to hold horses on an off-range pasture?

The applicant must submit a business plan that supports the dollar amount needed per head/day to conduct business with the government. The BLM cannot provide a suggested rate.

Will the BLM visit my property before making a decision?

Yes. If your 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 your immediate point of contact, and he/she will closely monitor your performance for compliance.

If awarded a contract, when would BLM begin shipping horses?

The BLM will begin shipping 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. Shipment of animals to the facility is anticipated to occur within 120-150 calendar days from the date of award. No payments shall be made until after animals are received at the facilities and have resided at the facility for one month.

If awarded a contract, how many horses are shipped and when?

Horses are typically shipped 34-36 animals at a time using a semi-truck and trailer. Contractor will need to be able to offload horses using a loading chute. Access to facility should be on all-weather road or when conditions permit trucks getting into the facility. A BLM representative will coordinate all loads prior to arrival at the facility.

Each awarded contract will receive all mares or all geldings. The BLM does not ship a mix of sexes to any contractor to reduce the chance of any additional animals born in captivity. However, the contracts that receive all mares will have to wean some foals during the first year. The BLM does not do a pregnancy check on mares removed from the range.

What is the standard payment timeframe for an off-range pasture contractor?

Each contractor keeps track of the number of horses on the off-range pasture facility and invoices the BLM once a month. After approval of the invoice, funds are distributed on a monthly basis.

How do I find out when the BLM is soliciting for additional off-range pasture facilities?

The BLM posts all solicitations on the official Government-wide Point of Entry (GPE) portal at www.fbo.gov and www.beta.sam.gov. Once a solicitation is posted, a press release/announcement is posted at www.blm.gov/whb under Funding Opportunities and through traditional and social media outlets.

How many off-range pasture facilities are currently under contract with the BLM?

The BLM has 38 off-range pasture contracts that range in size from 450 acres up to 46,000 acres; the average size is 20,000 acres. The pastures are currently located in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah and Washington. There are nearly 37,500 wild horses living in the current off-range pastures. They were gathered from one of nine Western states: California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, or Wyoming. There are no off-range pastures for wild burros.

What are the BLM's current population numbers on and off the range?

Per population estimates as of March 1, 2020, the BLM estimates that about 95,000 wild horses and burros are roaming on BLM-managed rangelands in 10 Western states, which is more than three times what BLM considers to be the appropriate management level. There are currently about 49,000 wild horses and burros fed and cared for at current off-range corrals and off-range pastures.

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. For animals that remain in holding, the BLM is seeking high quality, lower cost holding space.

What health care does the BLM provide to wild horses before shipping to off-range pasture facilities?

When wild horses are removed from the range, they are shipped to an off-range corral for an overall health inspection by a veterinarian. They are also vaccinated, dewormed, freeze marked, tested for EIA, and aged. A health and gather history is created for each animal and entered into the BLM's national database for tracking until the animal is adopted, sold, or dies.

In the case of wild horses shipping from an off-range corral on to an off-range pasture, a four-digit hip freeze mark is added to assist in visual tracking by the BLM compliance inspectors and contractors.

What health care does the BLM expect for the wild horses after arrival to off-range pasture facilities?

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.

What is the life expectancy of wild horses living on off-range pastures?

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 off-range pasture.

Are population growth suppression measures used on the off-range pastures?

All wild horses that go to off-range pastures 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.

How do I obtain general information about the BLM's Wild Horse & Burro Program?

You may visit BLM's Website at www.blm.gov/whb or phone 866-468-7826 or e-mail wildhorse@blm.gov. You can also follow the program on Face Book to see great adopter stories and updates.

After reviewing the solicitation at www.beta.sam.gov, who can I contact with additional technical questions about the agency's requirements for this solicitation?

The technical point of contact for this solicitation is Scott Fluer, 406-896-5222, sfluer@blm.gov. He can put you in touch with the Contracting Officer if you have further questions about the solicitation process.