

June 2021

USDA Forest Service Wild Horse and Burro Program

National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Virtual Meeting

The Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, manages wild horses and burros pursuant to the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (Public Law 92-195), as amended and per direction provided in 36 CFR 222.60 and Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2260.

Wild horses and burros are recognized as an integral part of the natural ecosystem within designated areas of National Forest System lands. They are to be managed, protected, and controlled, and populations should be maintained “in a thriving ecological balance in the areas they inhabit on national forests.”

In accordance with the act, as amended, “all management activities shall be at the minimal feasible level.” This appropriate management level (AML) is established to protect the environment, the animals themselves, and neighboring land owners. Animals that stray onto private property, exceed their AML, or otherwise cause damage to the environment can be classified as nuisance animals requiring management.



Gathers are a primary tool to manage wild horse and burro populations on public lands. USDA Forest Service photo.

2020 Gathers and Management Plans

- In compliance with a settlement reached in 2020, the Modoc National Forest plans a gather of 500 additional excess horses off the Devils Garden Plateau in 2021.
- Malheur National Forest plans to remove 25–50 nuisance horses from private and State land outside of the Murderers Creek Territory; an updated Territory Management Plan (TMP) is expected in 2022.
- The Carson National Forest continues to work with Homeland Habitat to trap nuisance horses that wander off territory, with the next operation expected in fall 2021.
- The Ochoco National Forest will implement a newly approved TMP in fall 2021 and plans to trap 25–50 excess horses; they continue to trap nuisance horses that stray onto personal property.



Horse herds can become a nuisance for land owners if not managed properly. USDA Forest Service photo.

Territories and Populations

The Forest Service maintains 53 wild horse and burro territories across 9 States (see map on next page). The agency actively manages 34 of these territories.

Populations of wild horses and burros are currently well above the appropriate management level.



2020 Placement Statistics and Forest Service Off-Range Infrastructure

The Carson National Forest placed 92 horses (42 adopted, 50 sold), and 30 burros (9 adopted, 21 sold) in 2020. The forest is planning to expand the Bloomfield holding corral system to be used for other forests within the region, where appropriate. The projected capacity for the expanded corral system is 500 animals.

The Modoc National Forest placed 186 horses (85 adopted, 69 sold, 32 government-to-government transfer) in 2020. The forest is home to the temporary Double Devil Wild Horse corral system that could be expanded or made more permanent. The eventual capacity could be 1,500 horses.

When Forest Service facilities lack space, animals may be moved to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) corrals. There are about 1,600 horses in BLM corrals. This partnership is one solution to remove excess animals from the landscape.

The USDA Forest Service Wild Horse and Burro Program objective is to maintain thriving, wild, free-roaming horse and burro populations in ecological balance with national forest and rangeland ecosystems.



Horses at an off-range corral. USDA Forest Service photo.



A map of the active wild horse and burro territories in the USDA Forest Service.

<https://www.usda.gov>

<https://www.fs.usda.gov>

For internal use only.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.