

Microchip Administrative and Insertion Procedures for Wild Horses and Burros

Microchipping Administrative Procedures

Microchipping will make the job of identifying animals much easier, faster, and more accurate as all animals are microchipped and microchip reading devices are distributed throughout the wild horse and burro program. The only acceptable microchip for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) use will be an 840 numbered, biothermal microchip which is registered with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This microchip has the added advantage of providing a measurement of body temperature.

1. Off-range corrals will microchip all animals shipped to off-range pastures. The existing inventory at off-range pastures (approx. 39,000 animals) will not be microchipped routinely unless they are tested for equine infectious anemia, for example, for movement from an off-range pasture to another location. The last four numbers of the freeze mark must still be applied to the hip to facilitate identification of the animals while on off-range pastures.
2. Animals gathered and held at either a temporary holding corral or an off-range corral that will be returned to the range will be microchipped. The microchip that is implanted will give the animal individual status in the Wild Horse and Burro Program system (WHBPS) and allow tracking of treatments that have been applied. A temporary ID (TempID) will need to be assigned to the animal initially to save the animal microchip number into the WHBPS. The WHBPS will create an unmarked animal record and will use the microchip number to track all information related to that individual animal, including recapture, release, and fertility control treatments. Unless a freeze mark on the hip is needed to identify animals from a distance, hip freeze marks can be discontinued. State brand laws need to be adhered to when marking an animal with an alpha or numeric code.
3. Microchip numbers will be displayed in WHBPS and on the animal's health card which accompanies the animal to its final destination.
4. Each microchip has a barcode identifier (8 copies) taped to the individual microchip, which will be used to facilitate record keeping when the microchip is implanted as well as data entry using a barcode reader. Barcode readers do not need any special software to run on the BLM network.
5. Each off-range corral has a compact handheld reader, a wand-like reader, and a barcode reader provided by the Wild Horse and Burro Headquarters Office.
6. Off-range corrals or state leads will request microchips from the Wild Horse and Burro Headquarters Office Contracting Officers Representative (COR) a minimum of 30 days in advance of the requested arrival date. The Headquarters Office in Reno, NV is the Device Manager for the microchip and has the Premise ID for ordering the microchips. The USDA registers the data (in their database) to the BLM upon purchase. For this reason, all microchips used by the BLM must come from the Headquarters Office in Reno. A list of the microchips' numbers that are dispersed to the respective off-range corrals or field offices will be kept at the Headquarters Office.

7. Microchips are in numeric order in the smaller box of 10 microchips but vary widely in the larger box of 500 microchips.

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Microchip Insertion

Microchipping is considered a veterinary procedure and should only be performed under the direct (on-site) or indirect (training and monitoring provided by a veterinarian) supervision of a veterinarian. A veterinarian must provide the training to staff for proper administration of the microchips. The first time a facility uses microchips, a veterinarian familiar with the procedure and BLM SOP must be present to insert the microchips and provide training to the staff.

1. Confirm the identity of the animal by checking the freeze mark if the animal already has one or ensure the microchip number corresponds with the freeze mark being applied to the animal.
2. Scan the left side of the neck using left to right and up and down pattern to check for an existing microchip with a universal scanner.
3. The implantation site is in the nuchal ligament on the left side of the neck halfway between the poll and withers and approximately 1-2 inches below the mane.
4. Scan the microchip prior to insertion and check that it is working correctly and that the microchip number matches the paperwork.
5. Clip and scrub the implantation site with alcohol.
6. Using a sterile technique to avoid contamination of the needle, insert the needle into the nuchal ligament of the neck up to the needle's hub, withdraw the needle slightly and depress the plunger. Care should be taken not to crush the microchip when pushing the plunger and to properly locate the microchip and not to simply implant the microchip under the skin. On adult animals the needle should be oriented at a 90-degree angle to the skin. On smaller foals the needle may need to be inserted at a 30-45-degree angle to control the depth of insertion to insert the microchip into but not through the nuchal ligament.
7. Apply pressure with a clean piece of gauze at the implantation site after removing the needle to minimize bleeding. Replace the needle cap and properly dispose of the needle in a sharps container.
8. Scan the implantation site with the universal scanner to confirm function of the microchip following placement.