



United States Department of Agriculture



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 landowners. Animals that stray onto private property, exceed their AML, or otherwise cause damage to the environment can be classified as nuisance animals requiring management actions.



Territories and Populations

The Forest Service has 53 Wild Horse and Burro Territories located on Forest Service lands. These territories are in 9 states, with 34 active territories and the remainder listed as inactive because they are unsuitable for a thriving horse population.

Populations are currently above the appropriate management levels of 2200 horses and 300 burros. There are estimated to be 1200 burros and 8900 horses on Forest Service lands.

2023 Management Statistics and Plans

Modoc National Forest: In compliance with a settlement reached in 2020 the Modoc National Forest gathered 492 horses in 2022 with a plan to remove 500-600 horses in 2023 animals. All animals are processed and adopted from the Double Devil’s Garden Wild Horse Corrals. There is a NEPA and an updated Territory Plan underway to include the “middle section” that was previously privately owned. Under the revised plan contraceptive management will be applied to horses on the range. AML is expected to be reached in 2025.



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The Double Devil's Garden corrals placed 96% of the horses from the corrals this past year. Recently they received 34 young horses that had been processed at the BLM corrals near Fallon and expect to have them adopted within a few months. They plan to receive further shipments of FS assigned animals from BLM as space allows to facilitate moving animals as quickly as possible into private holding. The Double Devil's Garden corrals utilize many hours of volunteer time to make progress on the Modoc National Forest.

Inyo National Forest: An updated NEPA and Territory Plan are underway. The harsh winter of 2022-2023 had some effects with increased visibility of natural losses near Mono Lake. The team has addressed inquiries from media outlets concerning the manure buildup and carcasses as the snow melt progressed in the area. There are plans to trap horses that are off the territory on state and private lands when the Plan is in place.

Malheur National Forest: An updated NEPA and Territory Plan are in process and nearing completion. Trapping of nuisance horses continues as needed. The BLM partners are waiting for the updated national MOU which is in negotiation to sign off on the plans.

Ochoco National Forest: A territory Management Plan is expected to be approved by the end of the year. A lawsuit is near conclusion which will allow the forest to move forward with their plans. Contraceptives are administered and planned for future management when AML is reached. There are plans to build a Wild Horse Interpretive and Teaching Center in conjunction with partners to facilitate better education and awareness of the issues surrounding wild horses and to promote adoptions. There will be corrals included with a capacity to hold and process 35 horses at a time.

Heber Wild Horse Territory: There are currently about 1700 horses on the territory and in the adjoining Apache National Forest requiring management. A NEPA and Territory Plan should be approved when sufficient personnel can be available to provide edits, and The Fish and Wildlife can complete their analysis. There is a plan to gather as many as 600 horses in 2023 if the plan is approved. A corral facility to hold horses as they are removed from the Forest is planned to facilitate processing, transfer to larger facilities and adoptions. Funding is needed to move the process forward in a timely manner.



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Carson National Forest: The Wild Horse corrals in Bloomfield, New Mexico are available for continual trapping, processing and adoption of horses and burros. Homeland Habitat is active in partnering with Forest Service to trap and transport animals and facilitating adoptions. The Bloomfield Corrals also accept horses and burros from other areas if approved by the Forest Supervisor. Active use of PZP continues at the Jarita Mesa and Jicarilla Territories.

San Bernadino National Forest: The Black Bear Burro Territory is planning to trap and remove up to 100 excess burros if funding becomes available.

Johnnie, Little Fish Lake, Red Rock, Shoshone, and Spring Mountain Territories are in the process of updating NEPAs and developing Territory Plans.



Region 4 (Utah and Nevada): All territories, in conjunction with tribal lands, are administering census flights in 2023. Multiple gathers and trappings are planned, particularly in association with BLM.



All areas are affected by continuing drought conditions. There is an acknowledgement that AML estimates may have to be modified to reflect the declining range conditions.

Contraceptive Use

Contraceptives are in use in some territories. Updated NEPAs and Territory Plans will include the use of PZP, GonaCon, and IUDs. They will also be written to allow use of new products that will be developed through ongoing equine research.



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