

## **Caliente Complex Bait and Water Trap Gather Questions and Answers**

***Q. What is the official name for this gather?***

**A.** FY2024 Caliente Complex Bait and Water Trap Wild Horse Gather

***Q. Why is this gather necessary?***

**A.** The purpose of the gather is to prevent undue or unnecessary degradation of the public lands associated with excess wild horses and to restore a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship on public lands, consistent with the provisions of Section 1333(b) of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act.

Removing excess animals would also enable significant progress toward achieving the Standards for Rangeland Health identified by the Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council.

***Q. How many horses will be gathered and how many removed from the range?***

**A.** Up to 350 excess wild horses will be gathered and removed.

***Q. Will the BLM implement any population suppression techniques? If so, what method or fertility control drug will be used and how many animals will be treated and released?***

**A.** No.

***Q. How many wild horses will remain in the Caliente Herd Area Complex?***

**A.** The post-gather population of wild horses will be approximately 672.

***Q. How many wild horses are currently in the Caliente Herd Area Complex and what is Appropriate Management Level (AML)?***

**A.** The Caliente Complex's nine Herd Areas are managed for zero wild horses due to insufficient forage and water to sustain healthy and viable herds long-term. Currently, an estimated 1,022 wild horses reside within the Complex.

***Q. How far, in relation to the trap site, are the horses and foals being herded?***

**A.** This is a water/bait gather. No helicopters will be used. Any herding will only be done via horseback and distance will be determined by the COR but varies depending on health of the animals, terrain and weather.

***Q. Is there livestock grazing in this area?***

**A.** Yes. The Caliente Herd Area Complex includes portions of 26 grazing allotments. Permitted livestock use in the nine Herd Areas includes cattle and sheep. Livestock use complies with the grazing system outlined in the final multiple use decisions, agreements and term permit conditions that provide for periodic rest and deferment of key range sites.

Due to inadequate forage and water, some permittees have put their allotted Animal Unit Months (AUMs) in voluntary non-use.

Additional livestock grazing information is located in the final environmental assessment, available online at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/93276/510>.

***Q. Is the BLM removing wild horses to make room for more livestock grazing?***

**A.** No. The BLM carries out removal of wild horses and burros from public rangelands to ensure rangeland health and in accordance with land-use plans developed in an open, public process. These land-use plans are the means by which the BLM carries out its core mission, which is to manage the land for multiple uses while protecting the land's resources. Authorized livestock grazing on BLM-administered lands has declined by nearly 50-percent since the 1940s; actual (as distinguished from authorized) livestock grazing on public rangelands has declined by 30-percent since 1971.

***Q. Where do the removed animals go?***

**A.** Horses identified for removal will be transported to the Axtell off-range corrals, in Axtell, Utah; Delta Wild Horse and Burro Facility, in Delta, Utah; and Sutherland off-range corrals, in Sutherland, Utah, where they will be checked by a veterinarian and readied for the BLM's wild horse and burro Adoption and Sale Program or long-term holding in Midwestern pastures.

***Q. What veterinary treatment will the removed horses receive?***

**A.** The horses will be aged (based on the condition of their teeth), de-wormed, vaccinated, blood-tested, and freeze-marked (marked with a cold brand) upon arrival at the facilities in Axtell, Delta and Sutherland, Utah.

***Q. What happens to animals that are not adopted?***

**A.** Un-adopted animals are fed and cared for in either short-term corrals or long-term Midwestern pastures. Animals usually over 10 years old and those passed over for adoption at least three times become eligible for sale, a transaction in which the title of ownership to the animals passes immediately from the Federal government to the buyer. (In the adoption process, the title of ownership passes from the Federal government to the adopter after the individual provides one year of humane care.)

***Q. Will any of the animals be sent to slaughter?***

**A.** No. While a December 2004 law granting the BLM sale authority authorizes the agency to sell sale-eligible animals "without limitation," the Bureau has **not been and is not selling any wild horses and burros to slaughterhouses or to "killer buyers."** All animals in holding retain their status as "wild" animals and remain under the BLM's protection.

***Q. Do wild horse overpopulations impact wildlife and plants?***

**A.** Yes. Common wildlife species within the Caliente Herd Area Complex include coyote, black-tail jackrabbit, desert cottontail, bobcat, and numerous raptors, reptiles and other small mammal species. Mule deer, elk and pronghorn antelope are common big game species in the area. Currently, the overpopulation of wild horses is adversely affecting valuable habitat needed to support livestock, wildlife, and wild horses.

Wild horses often graze the same area repeatedly throughout the year. Forage plants in those areas receive little rest from grazing pressure. Continuous grazing by wild horses does not allow

plants sufficient time to recover from grazing impacts. Such overgrazing results in reduced plant health, vigor, reproduction, and ultimately to a loss of native forage species from natural plant communities. Over time, this greatly diminishes habitat quality as abundance and long-term production of desired plant communities is compromised. If wild horse populations are not managed, forage utilization will exceed the capacity of the range.

***Q. What are some of the effects of wild horse and burro overpopulation on Threatened and Endangered Species?***

A. Maintaining the existing wild horse and burro over-population, which would increase with each successive foal crop, would result in continued and increasing impacts to threatened and endangered species populations and habitats. Wild horse and burro populations increase about 15-25% each year. Upland habitats would continue to see locally heavy levels of utilization associated with wild horse use, which would expand further as wild horse populations grow. Continued heavy grazing would occur on spring meadow systems and creeks adversely effecting sage-grouse habitat.

***Q. Why is the BLM removing wild horses and burros when already there are more than 64,000 animals in holding?***

A. The BLM must remove thousands of wild horses and burros from the range each year to protect public lands from the environmental impacts of herd overpopulation – such as soil erosion, sedimentation of streams, and damage to wildlife habitat.

Although the BLM tries to place as many removed animals as possible into private care through adoption or sales, the public's demand for adoptable wild horses has declined sharply over the last 10-plus years, leaving the federal agency in the unsustainable position of gathering excess horses while its holding costs spiral upward.

***Q. Why is the BLM removing horses that appear to be or are in good condition?***

A. The BLM gathers animals with different body conditions, including some that appear to be or are in good condition. The agency pro-actively gathers excess animals from overpopulated herds on a three-to-five-year cycle to prevent worst-case scenarios.

***Q. Will there be any designated public observers at the trap site?***

A. The BLM is utilizing the bait and water trap method. Wild horses are reluctant to approach the trap site if there is too much activity; therefore only essential BLM personnel will be allowed at the trap site during operations and the BLM will not offer a public viewing site for the gather.

***Q. What Contractor will be used for this Gather?***

A. Cattoor Livestock Roundup, Inc., of Nephi, Utah

***Q. How much will this gather cost?***

A. The BLM will calculate costs at the end of the gather.

***Q. Where may I learn more about the Wild Horse and Burro Program?***

A. Please visit the BLM's website at <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro>.