



## Questions and Answers for the Saylor Creek HMA Wild Horse Gather

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

**A.** Saylor Creek Wild Horse Gather

### ***Why is this gather necessary?***

**A.** The helicopter drive trap gather is necessary 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. The purpose of this gather is to reduce the overpopulation of wild horses, to prevent degradation of public lands by helping to balance herd size with what the land can support. The BLM aims to protect habitat for other wildlife and plant species.

The BLM's environmental analysis for the Saylor Creek Herd Management Area authorizes both bait trapping and helicopter drive trapping as approved gather methods. The helicopter method enables crews to safely and effectively move horses across the large, open landscape of the HMA and conclude the gather in the designated operational window, while continuing to meet all requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act and the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program. The year this herd was gathered via helicopter drive trap, the animals were gathered in one day compared to a three-week window for a bait trap gather. Considering limited staff availability, the option for a helicopter drive-trap was selected.

No natural water sources are present on the HMA and wild horses rely 100% on pipelines from wells and water troughs that are managed and maintained by livestock grazing permittees and BLM personnel. In addition, our winter snowpack and spring precipitation was very poor and drought conditions are severe, increasing competition and limiting water availability. ([Idaho Drought Monitor](#))

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

**A.** The BLM will gather up to 100 and remove up to approximately 68 wild horses from the Saylor Creek HMA, located in both Elmore and Owyhee Counties, about 15 miles south of Glens Ferry.

### ***Q. What will the remaining herd population of this HMA be?***

**A.** A total of 50 wild horses will remain in the Saylor Creek HMA. The Appropriate Management Level for the HMA is 50.

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

A. Generally less than 10 miles

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

A. Yes -- livestock grazing is permitted in the portions of the eight allotments that make up the Saylor Creek HMA. Livestock use complies with the grazing system outlined in the final multiple use decisions, agreements and term permit conditions.

**Q. *Is the BLM removing horses to make room for more cattle 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 how the BLM carries out its core mission, which is to manage the land for multiple uses while protecting the land's resources. Overall, 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. *Why is the BLM removing horses when there are already over 60,000 animals in holding?***

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

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

A. Excess wild horses, removed from the range, will be transported to the Boise Off-Range Wild Horse Corrals where they will be prepared for the BLM's adoption program.

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

A. Un-adopted horses are fed and cared for in either off-range corrals or pastures. Wild horses 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.) 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 to slaughterhouses or to "killer buyers."** All horses in holding retain their status as "wild" animals and remain under the BLM's protection.

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

**A.** No. As noted above, while a December 2004 amendment to the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act authorizes the BLM to sell sale-eligible animals "without limitation," the BLM has **not been and is not selling any wild horses to slaughterhouses or to "killer buyers."**

***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, and freeze-marked (marked with a cold brand).

***Q. Does the BLM use whips to move the horses through the pens and chute?***

**A.** The BLM uses flags or noise-making paddles to move horses through the pens and chutes. The flags are usually made by attaching a plastic grocery bag to the end of a sorting stick or buggy whip. The flag prevents the stick or whip from hitting the horse with any sort of impact or sting to it. Seeing and hearing the plastic flag motivates the animal to move away from the source of the stimulus. This technique is similar to those used for domestic and wild horses being trained using resistance-free methods.

***Q. How many of the mares gathered during this gather will the BLM treat with the fertility-control vaccine GonaCon-Equine?***

**A.** Up to 16 mares will be treated.

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

**A.** Please visit the BLM's Website at [www.blm.gov/whb](http://www.blm.gov/whb).