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# BLM News Release

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## **Wild horse management activities continue into fall at Sand Wash**

**CRAIG, Colo.**— Visitors to the Sand Wash area north of Maybell, Colo., may notice some bait stations and other activity this summer and fall related to keeping the wild horse population in the area healthy.

The Bureau of Land Management and the Humane Society of the United States have partnered for an ongoing research project looking at the feasibility of reducing the reproductive rate in the wild horse herd in the Sand Wash Basin through the use of a vaccine.

Two years ago during a wild horse gather, 62 mares in Sand Wash were treated with a fertility control vaccine and released. This vaccine, called PZP (porcine zona pellucida), was projected to prevent pregnancy in the mares for two years. This summer, as the vaccine begins to lose its effectiveness, the mares will be given a booster dose of the vaccine remotely using dart rifles.

“Wild horse populations in the West can double every four years because they have no effective predators,” said Acting Little Snake Field Manager David Blackstun. “We periodically conduct gathers to keep wild horse populations in check, and BLM is also researching the effectiveness of using fertility control vaccines like PZP.”

PZP is designed to delay fertility in mares to reduce the growth rate of the wild horse population, but not to sterilize them. Reducing the growth rate should reduce the frequency that expensive wild horse gathers are required.

In order to efficiently treat as many mares as possible, bait stations will be constructed around water sources in the Sand Wash Basin. Jute netting will be hung from t-posts for approximately 150 feet to guide the horses into the water. Hay, oats and salt blocks will be placed near the water to entice the horses to linger in the area, giving the trained darters an opportunity to deliver the vaccine. It is anticipated that the project to deliver the booster vaccine to the 62 mares will continue through September or October.

BLM has supported fertility control research for wild horses since the 1970s, hoping in particular that a single-shot vaccine providing multi-year effectiveness would be developed.



“By continuing our partnership with the Humane Society of the United States, BLM hopes to build the scientific, technical, and regulatory foundation for the use of the PZP vaccine as a safe and effective tool for helping control the growth of wild horse populations on western public lands,” Blackstun said.

BLM manages the 160,000-acre Sand Wash Herd Management Area for up to 362 wild horses.

For more information about BLM’s wild horse and burro program, or to find out how you can adopt a wild horse or burro, log onto [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov).

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