U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Washington, D.C. 20240

DECISION RECORD (DR)
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Test of 3-4 Year, Controlled-Release PZP Contraceptive for Wild Horses

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO: MT-010-05-12

INTRODUCTION:

The BLM has recently determined research priorities for the Wild Horse and Burro Program. The result is the development of a document entitled the Strategic Research Plan for Wild Horse and Burro Management (SRP). Within the strategy, continuing research on fertility control has been identified as a high priority. BLM believes that fertility control can eventually reduce the total number of animals that need to be adopted, handled, or held in captive situations, as well as the frequency, size, and cost of gathers.

To date, research has provided a 1-year and 22-month Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP) vaccine that meets most of BLM's stated criteria for an ideal fertility control agent. In addition, extensive research has already been conducted on the safety, efficacy, and duration of PZP applications in both domestic and feral horses on eastern barrier islands and in several BLM-managed herds. Research trials, to determine the effects of fertility control in free roaming wild mares using PZP, began in 2000 under the direction of the Fertility Control Field Trial Plan (FCFTP). Two levels of investigation, individual animal based and population based trials, are being conducted. Individual animal based studies are designed to investigate the possible behavioral implications of PZP treatments on wild horses, population dynamics, efficacy of the vaccine, body condition, and foal health. The primary focus of population based studies is to determine affect on population dynamics (reproduction rates).

BLM has requested that the existing vaccine be further developed to provide 3-4 years of infertility in a single inoculation. The use of a multiple-year vaccine has the potential to help promote herd health and fitness as well as reduce the cost of wild horse management dramatically by: 1) reducing the need for removal of horses from the range and 2) matching availability of wild horses for adoption with demand, so that few horses must be maintained in long-term captivity. The research hypothesis is that an additional 1-2

years of infertility can be obtained from the present 2-year vaccine by modifications of the controlled-release pellet technology utilized in this vaccine. Based on data obtained from the 2-year vaccine, 3 years of contraception is projected in most mares with a 4th year in >50% of treated mares.

In addition, two additional trials are proposed with the intent of improving the cost effectiveness of the PZP application. These trials propose to 1) reduce the initial dose of PZP within the primer shot as well as 2) the elimination of the need for an adjuvant in the pellet component of the time-release technology.

EA #MT-010-05-12 outlines relevant information regarding the use of a developed 3-4 PZP vaccine, a reduced dose of PZP in the primer shot and no adjuvant in pellet formulations during pilot studies with captive mares that will have already been determined excess from the rangelands. These studies are proposed to take place at the Wild Horse Inmate Program, East Cañon Correctional Complex outside Cañon City, Colorado or another acceptable BLM holding facility.

DECISION:

After considering the analysis and alternatives presented in the subject EA, it is my decision to implement the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action is to implement (~February/March 2005) a controlled pilot study with captive wild horse mares, in an effort to evaluate antibody titer response and (subsequent fertility) to a newly-developed PZP vaccine having a 3-4 year efficacy as well as separate trials for reduced dose PZP primer shots and no adjuvant pellets.

RATIONALE:

A safe and effective fertility control agent is essential to enable BLM to maintain wild horse populations at Appropriate Management Levels. Effective fertility control would reduce the number of animals that must be removed from western rangelands to maintain AML. The need for removal and subsequent adoption or housing in Long Term Holding Facilities has routinely exceeded budget capability since passage of PL 92-195. Effective fertility control is fiscally responsible and may extend the time between gathers resulting in reduced gather impacts to wild horses populations.

This trial is designed to provide information on a newly-developed 3-4 year, controlled-release PZP vaccine, as well as results for reduced dose PZP primer shots and no adjuvant pellets.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in EA #MT-010-05-12, I have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, in accordance with Section 102(2)(C) of the National

Environmental Policy Act, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

APPEAL PROCEDURES:

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations at 43 CFR Secs. 4.411 and 4.413. You may state your reasons for appealing if you desire. If you appeal, file a **Notice of Appeal** with the Bureau of Land Management at the following address:

Bureau of Land Management
WO-260, MS 314 LS
1620 L Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20046

a**nd a copy to**
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of the Solicitor
Division of Land & Water Resources
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 200240

Your appeal must be filed within thirty (30) days of issuance of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error. Within 30 days after filing the **Notice of Appeal**, file a complete statement of the reasons why you are appealing. This must be filed with the

United States Department of the Interior
Office of the Secretary, Board of Land Appeals
4015 Wilson Blvd.,
Arlington, Virginia 22203

Signed:

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Jeff Rawson
Group Manager WO-260
Wild Horse and Burro Program
Washington D.C.