

## **Summer Gather**

### ***Why are you gathering in the summer's extreme heat?***

During the summer, temperature and animal condition are monitored, and the gather activities are usually limited to morning and early afternoon hours. The distance animals must travel to the trap is shortened to minimize potential for stress.

We also make sure there is plenty of clean water for the animals to drink, and we keep a supply of electrolytes to add to the drinking water if necessary. Electrolytes help to replace the body fluids that may be lost during capture and handling.

### ***Isn't it true that during the summer foals are small and that a lot of the foals could be orphaned, killed or injured?***

During the summer, when foals are smaller, the BLM requires the contractor to herd the animals in a manner that allows foals to remain with their mares. In the event a foal is separated from the band, the pilot will either separate the mare and foal from the band and leave them back, he may abandon the attempt for that group of animals, or he will call for the assistance of a ground crew in order to gather the foal and its mare together.

The BLM also prohibits gathering wild horses with a helicopter during the six weeks before and the six weeks following the peak foaling period, which is March through June for most wild horse herds. During past gathers conducted by the Battle Mountain District during summer months, foals that are orphaned averages less than 0.5% of animals gathered.

### ***If foals are orphaned during the gather, how does the BLM take care of them?***

A very small number of foals can be orphaned in any gather. Sometimes foals that have been previously orphaned (abandoned by the mare) are also captured.

We make every effort to provide prompt, humane care to orphan foals. We administer electrolyte solutions to orphan foals and feed them milk replacer as needed to support their nutritional needs. Orphan foals also may be placed in an approved foster home to receive additional care. Once orphan foals are large enough, they are made available for adoption to qualified individuals who can provide them a good home.



*Wild Horse Specialist gives electrolytes to a foal during the Silver Peak HMA Gather in summer 2006*

***Is this an emergency action?***

Not yet, but it could be. The region is very dry, with inherently low annual rainfall and sporadic precipitation patterns and has a history of poor wild horse health due to lack of forage and water, especially during drought years. The region also has a history of emergency gathers.

The soil is poorly developed, and the vegetation communities are limited in the ability to produce forage for grazing animals.

The area receives only three inches of precipitation in the valley bottoms and 12 inches on the mountain tops. The weather station at the Tonopah Airport shows an average annual precipitation during the period of record (1954-2009) of just 5.08 inches. The Magruder Mountain rain gauge reflects an even lower annual average since 1985 of only 3.51 inches.



*Wild horse on the range during an emergency gather of the Goldfield and Montezuma Peak HMAs in 1996 illustrates the very thin body conditions.*

***What does the BLM do with horses and burros when they are removed from the range?***

The excess wild horses and burros removed from the range will be transported to one of the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Facilities (likely located in Nevada, Utah or California) to be prepared for the BLM wild horse and burro adoption program or for long-term holding (wild horses only). They will be checked by a veterinarian and receive vaccinations and freeze marks. We are not sure when these particular wild horses and burros would be available for adoption but they will be available for adoption as soon possible following the adoption preparation process.

Currently there are more than 30,000 wild horses and burros maintained at short and long-term holding facilities and pastures. In the case of long-term holding pastures, unadopted and unsold wild horses live out the rest of their lives in these grassy prairie-land areas of the Midwest, and are cared for by contractors. New contracts for long-term holding pastures will allow an additional 8,000 head to be cared for in long-term holding pastures, and these pastures will be available to accommodate the horses gathered from the Paymaster and Montezuma Peak HMAs and from other gathers. Animals are held between 10 and 25 years depending on their age when they enter lifetime holding. In contrast, only a small percentage of wild horses roaming public rangelands live past the age of 15 because of the harsher living conditions.



*Wild horses in one of the BLM's long term holding pastures, where forage and water are abundant.*