

U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Sheraton Hotel, Oklahoma City, OK

March 4 – 5, 2013



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

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Monday, March 4, 2013

Welcome/Call to Order

Dr. Boyd Spratling, Co-Chair of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board (Board) opened the meeting at 8:00 AM in the 20th Century Room of the Sheraton Hotel, Oklahoma City by introducing himself and the Board's Co-Chair, Julie Gleason. Dr. Spratling asked each of the Board Members to introduce themselves and which position they represent.

BOARD MEMBER	REPRESENTING
H. PAUL DURBIN	Wildlife Management
TIMOTHY J. HARVEY	Humane Advocacy
CALLIE HENDRICKSON	Public Interest
DR. BOYD SPRATLING	Veterinary Medicine
JULIE GLEASON	Public Interest
GARY ZAKOTNIK	Livestock Grazing
JUNE SEWING	Wild Horse & Burro Advocacy
JIM STEPHENSON	Natural Resource Management

Kathie Libby, a BLM employee serving as the meeting's facilitator, introduced herself and then welcomed the Board; those attend the meeting in person, and those participating via online streaming technology. Ms. Libby reviewed the agenda and stressed the importance of being respectful of others as the Board works through diverse and complex topics.

Welcome to Oklahoma

On behalf of the BLM New Mexico Region, Steve Tryon, Oklahoma Office Field Manager, welcomed the Board to Oklahoma. He made a presentation to the Board outlining important programs that his office supports. The Long-Term Pastures in the mid-West are in the jurisdiction of the Oklahoma Office. There are 31,130 horses on 228,698 acres of pasture in Oklahoma and Kansas. This office has enjoyed a successful adoption program and performs compliance on 98 percent of all adopted animals, mandatory compliance on all complaints, and 100 percent compliance on reduced fee and incentive animals.

The office faces considerable challenges in the future with regard to drought causing low forage and high feeding costs, sequestration uncertainty, and endangered species issues.

Oklahoma Wild Horse and Burro (WH&B) Program Overview

Pat Williams, Acting Program Manager, offered his welcome to the Board and provided an update on the New Mexico Herd Management Areas (HMA) and Jicarilla Joint Management Area (the BLM and U.S. Forest Service); target numbers for adoption, compliance and animal feed days; the 2013 adoption schedule that includes events in 11 locations throughout Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas, and New Mexico; information on the logistics of conducting an adoption and the marketing efforts required to successfully promote an event.

The Pauls Valley short term corral averages 590 animals on site, serves as a resting/shipping point for animals destined for adoption events in the central, southern, and eastern United States (U.S.), and functions as a pick-up/return location for horses involved in Mustang Heritage Foundation (MHF) events and the Trainer Incentive Program (TIP). The Hutchinson Correctional Facility is a successful inmate training program that has 350 horses held on site, 72 trained horses adopted in 2012, and 48 horses adopted to the Border Patrol since 2011.

The Mustang Heritage Foundation has broadened the exposure of the WH&B program through competitive events, partnering with the Hutchinson Correctional Facility to offer trained horses through the TIP program, and developing youth programs to educate elementary and high school students about wild horses and burros. For each Mustang Heritage Foundation event and TIP adoption in the New Mexico Region, the WH&B staff is responsible for approving adoption applications, handling all adoption and compliance related issues, and providing support for marketing efforts.

In addition, the New Mexico WH&B program provides several youth education opportunities, outreach programs and partnerships, including the Mid-West Mustang & Burro Saddle Club, which has provided tremendous support by facilitating adoptions, conducting workshops, and providing support through media coverage.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the October 29 and 30, 2012 meeting were approved.

BLM Response to Advisory Board Recommendations

Joan Guilfoyle offered her welcome and indicated with the sequestration, it was fortunate that the meeting was able to be held which is an indication of how important this Board is to the BLM. Ms. Guilfoyle went on to introduce the BLM and U.S. Forest Service staff in attendance from Washington, DC and other areas.

Ms. Guilfoyle provided a summary of the BLM's responses to five recommendations¹ made by the Board during its October 2012 meeting.

Recommendation #1 requests the formation of a Board-formed Financial Working Group with a purpose of the Board to better understand how the Federal budget process works and where program costs are accounted for within budget documents.

The BLM accepted this recommendation in December and assigned Holle' Hooks to serve as the point of contact.

Recommendation # 2 requests the BLM add ovariectomy as one additional tool for Population Growth Suppression. The Working Group would continue to work with the BLM to advance implementation, setting protocols, priorities and ensuring flexibility in implementation.

The BLM appreciates the Board's recognition for the need of additional population growth tools and agrees this tool should begin with research to determine if this procedure is safe, effective, and humane for free-roaming animals. The WH&B Research Advisory Team will work with the BLM management at their next meeting to develop a multi-step plan.

Recommendation # 3 requests that eco-sanctuaries not be considered on public HMA lands where horses currently exist.

When new leadership is in place at the Department of the Interior, the BLM will include the Board's recommendation in discussions regarding future private/public land eco-sanctuaries. The BLM's response to this recommendation is deferred to a later time.

¹ Provided under Tab 3 of the Board's notebook

Recommendation #4 requests the formation of a Board-formed Working Group to consider public comment.

The BLM accepted this recommendation in December and assigned Debbie Collins to serve as the point of contact.

Recommendation #5 requests the formation of a Board-formed Working Group to nurture the Director's Challenge-type efforts in support of volunteer resources.

The BLM accepted this recommendation in December and assigned Debbie Collins to serve as the point of contact.

All of the BLM responses are posted online and the Board appreciates the BLM's quick response to the Recommendations.

WHB Program Update from BLM

Letter from Ed Roberson – Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning

Ed Roberson was unable to attend the Board meeting, but sent the following letter that Ms. Guilfoyle read to the Board and attendees.

I am sorry that I had to miss this Advisory Board meeting in Oklahoma City. I am in Boise working on our National Greater Sage-Grouse planning effort. You all know from the discussion we had about the issue two meetings ago in Reno how important it is that we do all we can to ensure the sage-grouse does not need to be listed as a threatened or endangered species. As important, is that we continue to improve our wild horse and burro program. The challenges continue however. We have worked hard over the last several years to improve the transparency and animal welfare aspects our gathers, improve the screening and compliance aspects in our sales program, increase the use of population growth suppression tools in on the range, expand research and bring more sound science to our program, find ways to increase adoptions, find more cost-effective holding including exploring more opportunities for eco-sanctuaries on both public and private lands. You will hear about much of this in the next two days.

The NAS study is coming out this summer and look to it to illuminate the latest that science can bring to our program. Our research committee just met last week to discuss the state of our research to date and future studies to be implemented. Dean will be discussing the progress on a comprehensive animal welfare for the entire program. You will hear about the suite of guidance issued to bring about safer and more well run gathers, as well as guidance to improve the sales program. We have an eco-sanctuary operating on private land in Wyoming and are fully engaged in a planning effort for one to operate on public and private land in Nevada. These are opportunities to partner with individuals and groups to provide care of excess animals in the West in an environment they are accustomed to. The projects initiated with volunteers and stakeholders under the "Director's Challenge" are great successes of partnership on the land in the herd management areas.

We have made improvements, but we have struggles: Our adoption program is struggling because of the high costs of food and fuel, and because there are so many domestic horses available to those who want a horse. The Mustang Heritage Foundation makeovers are still popular, as is our other training programs, but we need more caring adopters to open up their hearts and homes to our excess animals. There are challenges with the fertility control drugs we have been using and are researching for future

use. Our long term and short term corrals are nearly at capacity. We need more long term facilities to move excess animals out of more expensive short term corrals and small pastures, into much less expensive and larger pastures like we have in areas in the mid-West. Drought, invasive species and fire are expanding in the West putting more pressure on the native ecosystem and cause us to shift gathers planned for areas often considerably over their appropriate management levels to areas where the horses and the resources are more at risk.

Add to these factors the fact that we are starting the budget sequester which will reduce our capacity in some aspects of our program. Plus the continuing resolution will soon run out and we do not have a budget for the full year. With what funds we are ultimately left with for 2013, we must care for the animals in holding facilities and pastures, and gather animals in areas where animal health and where the land and resources are at significant risk due to drought or fire. We must continue to research and implement more effective fertility control. We will continue to implement our animal welfare program. Beyond these things, we cannot be sure of what funding we will have for other aspects of the program.

So you meet in Oklahoma City this week to work on these and other challenges, hopefully to celebrate some successes as well. You are an outstanding Advisory Board and we have benefited greatly from your thoughtful deliberations and interaction with the public, and your recommendations for ways we can improve the program. We are near the end of the terms for three of you and the process for determining who will replace you or, if you reapplied, whether you will continue to serve on the Board. Either way, I want to thank Gary Zakotnik, Paul Durbin and Tim Harvey for their outstanding work to date on this critically important Advisory Board. Your contributions have been significant and I know as a result of your engagement with the other members of the Board this will be a very productive meeting.

Joan Guilfoyle is serving as the Designated Federal Official and will work in partnership with your outstanding co-chairs to see the meeting to a successful conclusion. Thank you all, and thanks to the staff and members of the public for their role in the Federal Advisory Committee process as well.

Adding to Mr. Roberson's letter, Ms. Guilfoyle added that this is a time of transition for the BLM with the appointment of a new Secretary of the Interior and a new BLM Director soon to be appointed.

Board Meeting book

Before moving into more updates, Ms. Guilfoyle reviewed a few of the tabs available in the Board's book.

Tab 4 – WH&B Advisory Board Charter/SOPs remain unchanged.

Tab 10 –U.S. Forest Service Report.

- Dr. Spratling asked Barry Imler to summarize the litigation on the Murderer's Creek Territory in Oregon to show the potential conflict between endangered species, wild horses, wildlife, and grazing.

Tab 13 – Guidance will be discussed later.

Tab 14 – BLM-issued news releases since December 7, 2012.

Tab 15 – Public Comments received in writing.

Follow up on Board requests/questions from October 2012 Meeting

1. Public Questions

Ms. Guilfoyle provided some information on a fairly new feature on the BLM website called "From the Public" which provides a more efficient and public way to respond to public questions. If there are comments that are clearly wrong, the responses get posted on this website. There are two comments in particular that Ms. Guilfoyle brought to the attention of the Board that are both addressed on the website:

- Sun J and their qualification to be a helicopter gather contractor
- Accusations related to the Piceance-East Douglas HMA in CO

The website link for "From the Public" is:

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/whbprogram/history_and_facts/from_the_public.html

2. 2012 Director's Challenge

Sally Spencer reported that the Director's Challenge for 2012 was an initiative to expand volunteer work on HMAs. There were twelve projects funded: one in California, four in Colorado, and seven in Nevada. Overall, all of the projects were a great success with many programs being able to complete their work and the remaining programs able to obligate the money in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 to complete the work in FY 2013.

The following is an overview of the projects by state:

California – there was one project accepted, from the Surprise and Eagle Lake Field Offices, for a quantitative evaluation of aquatic and riparian resources within the HMAs. This is a very rugged area and the offices had difficulty finding volunteers able to help. The field offices decided to set up public land day type of events where the volunteers could do some hands-on work.

There were some additional problems due to two fires in the HMAs. The Lost Fire burned 9 percent of the Buckhorn HMA and the Rush Fire burned 39 percent of the Twin Peaks HMA. The offices were able to allocate the resources for materials and they will complete their quantitative evaluation in FY 2013.

Colorado – there were four Director's Challenge projects accepted, one for each of the HMAs in Colorado; all were a success. The Friend's Groups were expanded or new Friend's Groups were developed; all of which help with the HMA. The Friend's Groups did a variety of projects including spraying for weeds, repairing fences, range improvements, inventory, and purchased fertility supplies so the volunteers could be trained to apply fertility control. Other activities included repairing springs and developing new water projects, developing signs, monitoring herds, and creating a herd photo gallery that is now on the Colorado BLM website.

Nevada – there were seven projects accepted. Activities included restoring and/or developing new water sources, replacing fences, monitoring water sources, public outreach, and the development of signs to keep the animals healthy.

The volunteers were extremely pleased to have worked on these projects. An overview of all the projects will be posted on the BLM website.

Ms. Guilfoyle commented that these are the kinds of programs the general public can volunteer to do, especially for those who like to get dirt under their fingernails. She commended Ms. Spencer for her work on this program and credits her for making the Director's Challenge a great success.

3. Sage Grouse on HMAs

Ms. Guilfoyle noted that Dr. Jeff Manning will discuss sage grouse on HMAs later this afternoon.

4. Board Access to information from the BLM

Debbie Collins has been sending BLM information to the Board.

5. Footage made available to the public

The Board requested that stock footage be made available to the public on the BLM website. This stock footage will be made available on the website. The media can receive higher resolution if needed by contacting BLM.

New Items (led by Joan Guilfoyle)

1. Instruction Memoranda

Ms. Guilfoyle directed the Board's attention to Tab #13 for Guidance and mentioned the Instruction Memoranda which are policies that the national program office created for gathers:

- Incident Command System – how the BLM operates – who is in charge and who reports to whom?
- Public and Media Management – how we manage public and media interest from gather operations; internal and external reporting.
- Internal and External Communicating and Reporting – establishes protocols for internally communicating and reporting gather information.
- Comprehensive Animal Welfare Policy (CAWP) – this was written for the gather operations and will be discussed later in the day. This particular policy is very important to the BLM.

There will be CAWP guidance developed for every aspect of the WH&B Program. This will include Instruction Memoranda (IM) for short term and long-term holding, adoptions, on-the-range management, and transportation of animals. The BLM is very serious about enforcing these IMs. A news crew that attended a recent gather was cited for not following the BLM policy, specifically for reckless negligence for vehicle operations and interference with BLM personnel and operations.

2. Interim Sales Policy

The Interim Sales Policy was issued in December 2012 in response to allegations that purchasers of BLM wild horses and burros sold those animals to slaughter. The main points of the Interim Sales Policy are that no more than four wild horses or burros can be purchased by anyone within a six month period of time without approval of the Assistant Director. The BLM will not sell more than four wild horses and/or burros destined for a single location, regardless of who the purchaser might be, without the Assistant Director's approval. In addition, the purchasers must provide transportation that meets the BLM standards.

It is absolutely not acceptable to mistreat any wild horse or burro. On the BLM website, there is information on how to report suspected inhumane treatment of federally-protected wild horses and burros.

Last fall the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) took over an investigation concerning allegations that a purchaser intentionally sold wild horses to slaughter. Since this case is now with the OIG, the BLM is not privy to the status of the investigation. The BLM cares deeply about the welfare of the animals and absolutely condemns the sale of any wild horses or burros to anyone who may cause them harm. The Interim Sale Policy will be in place until the long-term sales policy is complete. In addition, when the Board decided last October to meet in the Midwest, it had nothing to do with the Oklahoma State Legislature's recent legislation regarding slaughter plans.

It is also very important to note that the BLM prosecutes people who try to sell wild horses to slaughter. On February 13, 2013, in Utah, an individual who purchased 64 horses and tried to ship 47 of them to Mexico for slaughter was sentenced to 12-month probation and almost \$9,000 in fines. The BLM policy is that selling wild horses or burros for slaughter is absolutely unacceptable.

Timothy Harvey raised a question about the possible protocol to make adoption and sale requests a public process. Ms. Guilfoyle was not in a position to answer the question on behalf of the BLM, but suspected there would be privacy issues. It is important to note that most of the people who have adopted and purchased wild horses and burros over the years have given them good homes.

3. Guidance - Euthanasia

The old euthanasia policy has now expired and a new one is under review. The updated policy will be in place in the next month or so.

4. Wyoming Eco-sanctuary

The first private eco-sanctuary opened in southeastern Wyoming at the Deerwood Ranch. The eco-sanctuary has a capacity for 250 horses. To date, 231 horses have been shipped. A public tour is scheduled for September 7, 2013. It is possible that sequestration will prohibit this tour; however, the Bureau will keep the public and the Board updated as plans progress.

5. Junior Explorer

Sally Spencer gave a report on the new Junior Explorer WH&B Activity Book that is currently in draft form. This book will educate children on the WH&B program. The BLM is very excited about this book and when completed it will also be available on the website for downloading and printing.

6. Director's Challenge 2013

Money from the sale of wild horses and burros was protected from sequestration and will be used for volunteer projects that focus on adoption and sales. Debbie Collins will coordinate this program.

7. Carson City, NV

Eleven horses that are part of the Pine Nut Mountains HMA in Nevada had moved outside of the HMA, adjacent to Deer Run Road on the outskirts of Carson City. On January 23, 2013, the BLM's Carson City District Office began bait trapping and removing these horses and concluded the gather on February 27. These horses were routinely crossing the Carson River into River View City Park, and the BLM received several complaints of people feeling threatened by the horses. After initially gathering 5 of the 11 horses, the BLM took a break from bait trapping because of some community concerns and met with

constituents to hear their position and potential solutions. The community group submitted ideas that the BLM considered, but, unfortunately, these proposals did not address and resolve all of the public safety issues. The BLM-Nevada Office has posted the community's proposals, as well as its information regarding the viability of these solutions, on its Website. The BLM recognizes that these horses have been part of the community for many years; however, we have a responsibility to keep wild horses from creating a safety hazard or threatening the well-being of the community and its animals. For instance, over the past two years, four horses have been struck and killed by vehicles. Community complaints submitted to the BLM have ranged from concern for the safety of residents' children to concern over stallions fighting with domestic horses through fences. In all of the complaints, concerns over safety and property damage were expressed. The captured horses will be offered for adoption on Saturday, March 23, 2013, in Carson City. The BLM is hopeful that anyone with the capacity to adopt these horses and give them a good home will step forward and do so.

8. Rendering Plant Number Discrepancy

There have been questions raised as to why the number of animals at the rendering plant in Reno, Nevada, is different than the Palomino Valley short-term corral death report. These questions have led to accusations that the BLM is purposely hiding a number of animals that died at the facility. This question from interested parties led the BLM to take a look at the policy of reporting animal deaths.

The discrepancy is due to the accounting methods BLM currently employs. We are, however, re-considering our processes and procedures to improve transparency. The BLM remains committed to the health and well-being for the wild horses we are charged with protecting. It's a responsibility we do not take lightly.

9. Mustang Heritage Foundation

Stormy Mullins of the MHF offered an update of the 2013 events in partnership with the BLM. Mr. Mullins is in charge of the facilities, helps with animal pick up. He commented that he has always received a very friendly welcome by the BLM.

Year 2012 was a fantastic year with 10 Extreme Mustang Makeover (EMM) events held in California, Oregon, Colorado, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and New Jersey. At these events, the trainers show the horses they have worked with and the horse get adopted and go to a good home. The MHF is very proud of the 800 adoptions through the EMM events and the TIP program in 2012, and have plans to adopt 2,000 horses through the TIP program, EMM and Mustang Million events in 2013.

10. Advisory Board Book Tabs

On Range Management (Tab 5)

Tab 5 of the Board book is a summation of the Fall/Winter 2013 Gathers. The gather plan for the rest of 2013 is in question partly because of sequestration, and partly because the BLM holding facilities are almost full. There are no summer gathers scheduled at this time.

Off Range Space Report (Tab 6)

Tab 6 is a summation of the capacity and the number of animals in short-term corrals, long-term pastures, and eco-sanctuaries.

Program Budget (Tab 7)

The WH&B program is funded through a Continuing Resolution of \$36,628M through March 28, 2013. The Board-formed Financial Working Group will discuss the program expenditures as of February 14, 2013.

Other Tabs

Tab 8 contains information regarding the Adoptions and Sales report.

Tab 9 is the litigation report.

The Board asked how the website can be used as a more effective form of communication. Ms. Guilfoyle noted that the website can be used for posting results of projects and responding to questions from the public.

BLM – Formed Working Groups

Increasing Adoptions – BLM Lead, Sally Spencer

The Working Group felt the program would be more effective if the focus was on a few ideas instead of trying to do everything at once. Key topics are:

- The BLM should focus on getting more horses to adopters in the North East. The closest short-term corral is in Elm Creek, Nebraska. Also there are very few adoption events scheduled in the North East each year. One idea is for a Request for Proposal for small haulers to ship smaller groups of horses to adopters and trainers.
- Work with the BLM Eastern States office in VA to determine if a selection of the horses could be kept at the BLM Meadowood property in Lorton, Virginia. This location has been used for pickup for some of the makeover events in New Jersey, and is much closer to the North East than the short-term corral in Nebraska.
- Trained wild horses at Riverton, Wyoming, are not being adopted. Recommend putting together a load of trained horses and hauling them to an adoption event in the East. This would be coordinated with the Northeastern States Field Office in Wisconsin.
- The New Mexico region has come up with some incentives for adopters. Someone who adopts a four year old horse (or older) can receive \$500 once the animal is titled. This incentive could be used by other states.
- The working group wonders if there is a way to offer tax incentives through tax credits for adopting a horse from the BLM. The team is working on an analysis of the cost effectiveness of a tax incentive.
- The BLM continues to get calls from individuals from other countries who want to adopt a wild horse. Since there have been successful overseas adoptions, the team discussed matching the adopter and the trainer who will work out their own fee schedule. The trainer will work with the horse for a year. Communication would go out on Facebook, the website and other social media outlets to match adopters to trainers.
- There is a need to increase our grassroots communications and public awareness. The BLM needs to increase the use of local electronic updates as an opportunity to get adopters together. There are a couple of states that do a very nice job of this by using newsletters with updates on

events and information. This includes activities to help with adoptions, assistance needed on HMAs, and a variety of opportunities to help.

- Encourage BLM facilities to promote all other facilities' available horses. If a potential adopter calls one facility with an inquiry on a certain type of horse and that facility does not have that type of horse, they can refer the potential adopter to another facility.
- Encourage BLM Facebook friends to promote the adoption events. The best advertisement for adoption is to see an adopter riding a gentled wild horse.

Some good conversation and ideas came from the Board following Ms. Spencer's presentation. One idea was to promote quality-trained horses to adopters in Central America countries, particularly the Dominican Republic, since horses are valued and used as part of the economy. The thought was to utilize the TIP program to train horses, and then partner with a non-profit to assist with shipping the horses overseas. Another thought was to partner with someone like Heifer International where individuals can donate an amount to a particular horse until funds are available to ship the horse. There are also very successful western competitions going on in Europe and obtaining an American mustang is considered a status symbol at these events. Maybe there could be an international TIP Program. There is a strong concern of how to monitor the horses after they are shipped. This is something that needs careful consideration.

The Board emphasized that a trained horse is far more marketable than untrained, and dramatically reduces prisoner recidivism in inmate training programs. A suggestion of having some system of doing "trainability" assessments before adoption might be a good idea.

Eco-Sanctuary

Zach Reichold reported that the second round of private eco-sanctuary proposals are taking a bit longer to evaluate than planned. The proposals need to be evaluated on paper first and then have physical site visits. Sequestration has hampered the site visits thus delaying the process.

There was a question from the Board regarding the public/private eco-sanctuary proposals. The contractors just met with the Elko district to discuss alternative actions, determine a plan, and to start drafting proposed actions. This is quite a lengthy process for the federal government that involves new programs on federal land, agriculture concerns, water concerns, as well as endangered species. The Nevada Office is continuing to review the proposal under the National Environmental Policy Act and there will be a chance for public comment in the future. There was a question from the Board concerning the number of long term holding pasture solicitations. Carolyn Chad, WH&B Acting Deputy Division Chief, responded that the quality of the applications were more of a concern than the quantity. The Spanish Q Ranch in Ennis, Montana was selected as a long-term pasture even though there were originally five appeals to the decision: one appeal was denied and four other appeals are still waiting to be heard. After the completion of the 45 day decision period, the BLM made the decision to ship horses to the new facility. Six loads of horses were shipped to the new facility with the understanding the appeals may result in the horses being returned to BLM holding facilities. There are 15,000 acres in Spanish Q with a capacity of 750 horses. The primary concern was inadequate fencing, which has been fortified. The local community has an interest in the horses being there and all seems to be going well.

WHB Gathers: Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program

Dean Bolstad reported that it is the goal of the BLM to develop a Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program that establishes Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the humane care of wild horses and

burros in every aspect of our program. This includes gathers, short-term and long-term holding, adoptions, on-the-range-management, and transportation of animals.

There are three basic components of the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program:

1. Standard operating procedures
2. Education and training for those handling the animals
3. Internal and external auditing that will assess adherence to the SOPs.

The BLM reported at the last meeting that 30 pages of draft SOPs had been developed for the gather component of our program. Dr. Kathryn Holcomb and Dr. Carolyn Stull, University of California, Davis, are under contract to assist the BLM to refine the gather SOPs. The 30 pages have been condensed into about 20 pages that have been reviewed by the BLM's CAWP gather working group.

Questions have risen as to why the BLM hasn't implemented these procedures yet. The BLM has implemented a portion of the SOPs through one of the Instruction Memoranda reported by Ms. Guilfoyle (copies are in the Board book). There are 27 points of manager's expectations during gather operations, and a few that deal with transportation. The BLM has implemented as much as possible under the current gather contracts, and any further changes would be "cardinal changes" that are not possible to implement under the existing helicopter gather contracts. The final and more comprehensive SOPs will be implemented into new contracts starting in July or August 2013.

The gather schedule is subject to change due to emergency situations. There was a fire on one of the HMAs that burned 90 percent of the area and in another HMA, all water dried up. The horses in those HMAs were not scheduled to be gathered but ultimately were removed.

Standard Operating Procedures

As a continuation of the CAWP presentation, Dr. Kathryn Holcomb, animal welfare expert from University of California, Davis who is under contract to BLM, presented information regarding her work with the BLM and animal welfare assessment programs.



Five Freedoms (Brambell Report, 1965)

- Freedom from hunger or thirst
 - Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury or disease
- Freedom to express normal behavior
- Freedom from fear and distress

Dr. Holcomb noted that during the last century there has been a great deal of concern for the rules about how animals were being treated; in particular in the realm of science and animal testing. The Brambell report came out in 1965 identifying a framework for animal welfare where the animals should be able to get up, lie down, turn around, groom themselves, and stretch their limbs. From this report came the framework now known as the "Five Freedoms." While these are not laws or absolutes, and there is some disagreement as to meaning and application, it provides a sound framework for animal welfare.

What is animal welfare? In the simplest terms, it is how an animal copes in its environment. We recognize there are three aspects to animal health:

- Body – the physical health of the animal
- Nature – the animal’s nature and how the species interacts in the wild
- Mind – the mental state of the animal such as fear, distress, motivation, enjoyment.

One of the first livestock issues that came under scrutiny by the public was the issue of slaughter and transport to slaughter. The result was pressure from the public on big market companies (such as McDonalds, Wendy’s, and Burger King) to be accountable for the practices of its suppliers and to know what was in their food. Welfare assessment programs and audit systems were developed to certify that farm animals were well cared for.

The goal of the welfare assessment programs is for the public to receive assurance that the best practices of humane animal care are being used. When a producer has met the animal welfare standards, they receive a certification and a label that can be put on a product thus giving them a market advantage.

While there are many organizations doing such certification, it is up to the consumer to research each certification so they know what the label stands for. What the organizations do have in common are the standards. The standards are generally categorized into two groups:

- Engineering based standards - include facilities and measurements such as fencing, maintenance and safety of transportation, feed and water
- Outcome based standards – animals directly observed and management practices such as body conditions, sores, lacerations, and falls.

The BLM’s CAWP is based on the farm animal assessment program for the humane treatment of animals. The purpose of CAWP is to regularly assess the welfare of the animals, document and report to the public, train employees, and provide data for the ongoing evaluation of the program.

The development of the components to the CAWP is a collaborative process by University California Davis, the BLM, and external welfare experts. The CAWP is comprised of three basic components:

1. Standards – the basic rules of what will and will not be allowed. The Standards cover six areas including Facility Design, Handling, Capture Technique, Animal Care, Transportation, and Euthanasia. There are written designations for major and minor deficiencies that are based on both Engineering and Outcome categories. Required documentations is caused by any type of roping, use of electric prod, any WH&B death, and occurrence of any prohibited action or event.
2. Education – a one-hour training module that everyone must take to insure the same level of knowledge resulting in responsible and appropriate handling of animals. Once the course is completed, a certificate of completion is generated with periodic recertification being required.
3. Assessment – the assessment tool is the basis for internal and external reviews to determine adherence to the SOPs. Assessment provides ongoing program evaluation with results recorded in an electronic database that is valuable for benchmarking, feedback to personnel, identification of training needs, and providing information to the public. The Standards have been drafted, and are being reviewed. Once approved, they will be implemented with the new contracts.

Comments from the Board indicate their approval of the work being done on the SOPs and an acknowledgement of how difficult yet thorough they are. The remaining components of the new

SOPs will be developed by October 2013.

Research Advisory Team

Dr. Jeff Manning led the Research Advisory Team discussion and provided updates on fertility control, genetics, and population estimation.

Fertility Control

- SpayVac Pasture Trials (Oklahoma) - This five-year captive breeding trial was initiated with treatments applied in 2011; blood was drawn from and ultrasound and palpation were applied to mares in January 2013. The vaccine performed well in the first year, but suboptimally in the second year. Researchers are trying to identify the causes or mechanisms for this poor performance.
- The PZP Pen Trial (Nevada) - This unique study was initiated in 2011 to investigate efficacy of a three to four year pelleted vaccine. There are four components to the study:
 - 1-month and 3-month pellets injected into the mares, which performed very well in fertility control.
 - 12-month and 24-month pellets: the 12-month pellets are referred to as PZP-22 and have been reported by the researcher conducting this study to have been ineffective at reducing fertility. The 24 month pellets are anticipated to time release in the mares this winter, and the effects of this time-delayed release are anticipated to occur in the third year (this spring/summer); the BLM awaits those results after they are collected.

The results so far indicate that PZP works well for the first year. The researcher is investigating reasons for suboptimal performance of PZP-22 in the second year. There was a question from the Board about the possibility of the injection site causing swelling thus prohibiting the pellet from working. Dr. Manning noted that there are actually two injections: the primer and the pellet in some cases. There might be an additional problem with the way the pellets release and the polymers that are used.

- PZP Field Study (Humane Society of US) is wrapping up after four years and the BLM awaits the final report.

Genetics

The genetics program is proceeding as planned with the field offices continuing to collect genetic information at each gather. Dr. Gus Cothran provided the 12 new reports to the BLM in 2012.

Sources of bias	Solutions
Double counting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GPS locations and photographs• Brief survey occasions• Standardized routes
Detection bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect relevant covariates• Build mark-recapture models that estimate and correct for observer biases

Population Estimation

Dr. Manning is very excited about the methods and opportunities to apply new research and protocols in population surveys. There are four surveys have been completed using the new protocols: two in Nevada, one in California, and one in Utah. And five others are being designed: one in Nevada, one in California, and three in Utah.

It takes time to develop each survey since every survey's protocol is unique due to differences in the topography and herd size. The goal population estimation is to parlay unbiased estimates of

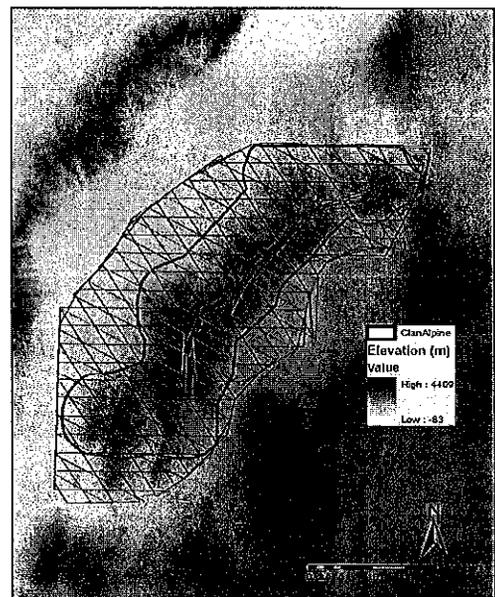
abundance. There are two sources of bias that can compromise counting:

- Double counting: count an animal two or more times resulting in bias estimates too high.
- Detection : observer doesn't see all the animals during the survey resulting in bias estimates too low

Solutions to double counting are GPS locations and photographs, brief survey, and standardized routes. Solutions for detection bias are to collect relevant covariates and build mark-recapture models that estimate and correct for observer biases.

The Board asked whether or not microchips would be appropriate due to the extremely low cost of the chip and the power of technology to store information. Dr. Manning noted that you have to be within a foot of the animal to read the chip.

A sample of a survey design was provided to the Board (see right). There are six separate survey routes that provide a clean comprehensive accounting. The helicopter flies in six routes overlapping the HMA to ensure all animals are accounted for. This seems to be the most effective way to estimate the population, but a cost analysis is being done as a comparison to the old system. The field offices work in conjunction with the Research Advisory Team to determine where the horses are located. In one sample, there were an estimated 2,594 horses in the HMA and the survey showed 2,520 animals were counted – or 97.1 percent directly observed during the survey.

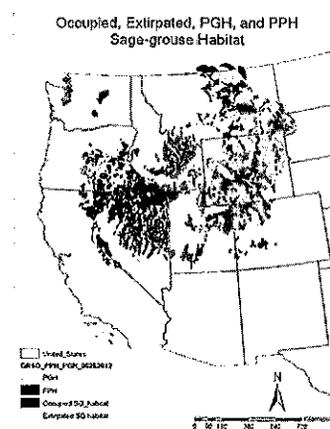


Additional Thoughts

There are 179 HMAs across the U.S. with each having different demographics rates. There are different circumstances in which you would need open population rates and times you would need closed population rates. As such, demographic rates differ among populations at any point in time and within populations through time. These are very important things to think about when you're trying to develop field studies in one or several HMAs and then apply these findings to all the HMAs.

Sage Grouse Habitat

The BLM and U.S. Forest Service are partnered to amend or revise resource management plans to address sage grouse conservation. One of the concerns is if we are leaving the HMAs overpopulated, then the vegetation is not being protected and the Sage Grouse loses its habitat. One-third of the HMAs are overlapped by the Sage Grouse habitat.



Advisory Board-Formed Working Groups

Population Growth Suppression

The recommendation to consider ovariectomies as one of the population growth suppression tools was made at the October meeting (refer to Attachment 1).

Eco-tourism

This Working Group discussed the need to identify HMAs (not eco-sanctuaries) that would be used as recreation sites for eco-tourism. Partners in the community could obtain a special use licenses for tours that would give the public a chance to see wild horses in person, and also learn about wild horses, the BLM, and range ecology. Once a successful model has been set up, it can be replicated on other HMAs. It will be important to carefully watch the social impact humans will have on the horses if there are daily tours. Refer to Recommendation #1.

Herd Area Repopulation

This Working Group discussed the challenge of locating an HMA that is appropriate for herd repopulation and finding a non-profit to help with implementation. The National Mustang Association has a successful sanctuary for non-reproducing horses and would be an excellent example of what works. Having a non-reproducing herd would eliminate considerable management efforts since the horses do not need to be gathered. Refer to Recommendation #2.

Adoption Director's Challenge

The Working Group will continue to be a resource as needed for the adoption focused Director's Challenge.

Public Comment Period

The Board Chairs expanded the public comment period over the allotted one hour to allow 24 speakers the opportunity to address the Board. Each speaker was asked to limit their presentation to three minutes to ensure all speakers had an opportunity within the timeframe identified for public comment. Speakers were encouraged to submit their comments in a written format; therefore, no minutes were recorded during this session of the meeting. Following the conclusion of the public comments, Ms. Guilfoyle addressed the audience. She noted that the "From the Public" page is a place on the BLM website where the public can get correct information on issues. Ms. Guilfoyle addressed some of the comments.

Tom Davis

The Office of the Inspector General is investigating the allegations.

Slaughter

The BLM condemns the sale of wild horses and burro to anyone who intends to cause harm and we will prosecute those found guilty. Any allegations that the BLM has a connection to horse slaughter are absolutely incorrect.

Composition of the Advisory Board Membership

The Advisory Board membership is designed to represent the diverse interests in the protection and management of wild horses and burros. Different opinions are important in forming the Board's recommendations BLM.

Exclusive use of public lands

No animal can or should have exclusive use of the public lands.

Fertility control

In most instances, wild horses must be gathered to apply fertility control.

Helicopters

Helicopters are the most efficient way to gather wild horses. Protocols have been put into place to insure that gathers are safe.

The Board noted that the demographics of this Board reflect the demographics of the public. A discussion does not mean that it is the course of action that will be taken – only that the Board is looking at options.

Meeting Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:49 PM.

Tuesday, March 5, 2013

The Board meeting convened at 8:07 AM.

All of the Board members introduced themselves to those in the room.

Advisory Board Formed Working Groups

Financial – Callie Hendrickson and Paul Durbin

This Working Group is learning about the BLM budget process. Holle' Hooks, WH&B Specialist (Budget), noted that operating under a continuing resolution, not having a budget, and then being sequestered, and not being able to develop the 2014 budget, has left a lot of unanswered questions for the program. It is not known yet how the sequestration will affect the program other than the BLM will continue to care for the animals in holding; manage population growth; and have limited herd management activities such as hauling water, fence maintenance, and monitoring for animal and land health conditions.

Public Comments – Paul Durbin, June Sewing, and Tim Harvey

There were lively comments from yesterday's Public Comments session. One of the things this Working Group wants to do is to be able to address the "can you hear me" comments, because the Board is listening.

This Board is advisory and it is not a conflict to have people with different points of view serving on the Board. The wild horse and burro issue is not one sided and there were some very good points made yesterday. It's important to find the common ground where positive change can begin to take effect.

The Working Group addressed several comments from yesterday's Public Comments session with their individual opinions.

- Single species management doesn't work. This is an entire eco system with not only horses but wildlife.

- The Act says horses can be managed where they were found when the Act passed. If an area is designated as an HA and there are resources available to manage the horses, then they should be allowed to go back into an HA. The Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program was addressed in the Monday morning session that much of the public missed. The program is starting with the gather policy and will have a CAWP for all aspects of the program.
- Salt Lake City Holding Facility was a situation where the BLM listened and took positive steps.

Yakama Nation Horse Reservation

Jim Stephenson reported on the Yakama Nation Horse Reservation and the problems that exist with the land management. Mr. Stephenson remarked that today there are 12,000 to 15,000 horses on the reservation, up from 500 in 1957. The condition of the horses is that they are underweight and on a scale of one to ten, the horses are a three. The herd increases in size by 20-30 percent a year. The overabundance of horse population has been hard on the land with the entire eco-system being damaged. The tribe is trying to capture the over population of horses and manage the lands.



There has been extreme habitat deterioration due to the horses. The habitat is what's important for the entire eco-system. The horses are over the AUM by 10 times.

The body weight of the horses indicates a significant deficit. This is a good example that horses will expand to the land mass that is available to them and the result is they will destroy it. This adds credence to having proactive range and horse management a main priority.

Mr. Stephenson noted that as a society, it is incumbent upon us to manage the wild horses in a sustainable manner so they are not abused by Mother Nature who will manage them in a cruel way.

Board Members' Concerns and Issues

Trained horses to the east

The Board has serious concerns about the adoption program and the need to find more adoptive homes. The marketing firm, Fleishman-Hillard, indicated that the BLM needed to create an adoption brand in order to market the horses. The Mustang Heritage Foundation was formed to address this need, but there is more of the market that is being missed.

Volunteers

The Board would like to be a resource for volunteers through their various contacts. It was suggested that a Letter of Recognition be issued to those who have volunteered with the program, or even a Letter of Appreciation from the Board.

Money

Whenever there is a project that needs funding, individuals can contribute to a non-profit who can then directly pay for project needs or individuals can purchase and donate items to the BLM. The Board recommends donations be made to the Mustang Heritage Foundation or the National Mustang Association.

Travel

There were questions from the Board about the cost of airfare and how the individual Board members can make their own reservations on cheaper flights. The government contracts with air carriers to purchase tickets which allows for a complete refund if needed. This may not be as cheap as individuals can get online, but the benefits should offset the additional cost.

Board Recommendations to the BLM

After considerable discussion, the Board prepared the following recommendations to the BLM.

Recommendation 1: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends the BLM become involved in eco-tourism and consider the following:

1. Identify 2 existing HMAs that would be good recreation sites to develop a model to be replicated
 - a. Solicit recommendations from local offices by 6/2013
 - b. One may be near a metropolitan area and the other in a more rural setting
 - c. Work closely with local groups already positively engaged with BLM in the HMA
2. Selection of good partners is critical
 - a. Promotes a positive image for/of BLM
 - b. Provides balanced multiple information
 - c. Annual review of compliance and established protocols
3. Education
 - a. Delineate challenges BLM faces in managing the rangelands in the arid climate and balancing multiples uses
 - b. Include a strong component of rangeland, ecosystem, and animal health as well as financial constraints
 - c. Utilize the fact sheets from BLM web site
4. Appropriate observation of horses/ burros
 - a. Safety- focus on the safety of people and horses including but not limited to not feeding or touching the horses
 - b. Social impact on horses- too much people-traffic desensitizes the horses.

Recommendation 2: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends the BLM establish non-reproducing herds in existing HAs and HMAs and consider the following:

1. Identify HAs and/or HMA's for establishing non-reproducing herds.
2. Engage advisory board members in the process of exploring and recommending further action.
 - a) Form a working group (herein after referred to as the Group) of National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board members to develop recommendations. Said group shall be comprised of at least three but not more than five Board members.

- b) Group will establish criteria for evaluations of the HA/HMA for suitability of herd reintroduction. Said criteria shall be developed by July 1, 2013. Collaboration with BLM and any interested parties may occur during this process.
- c) Using the criteria established, the Group will confer with BLM personnel and examine all HA/HMA's to attempt to identify at least three locations where the reintroduction of non-reproducing herds is feasible. Explore the possibility of developing a program that will assist private sector in establishing non-profit sanctuaries for non-reproducing herds on private lands and/or leased BLM lands.
- d) The Group will formulate their findings and report their recommendation(s) to the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board by October 1, 2013.

Recommendation 3: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that the BLM increase focus and success in adoptions in the East and consider:

1. Increase/ establish storefronts on eastern market engaging MHF, using tip-trainers
2. Use skill set and business models of MHF to help Eastern States adopt more horses
3. Specific locations reviewed/ considered—e.g.; Meadowood; Piney Woods; Ewing
4. Consider additional private haulers who would assist TIP trainers
5. Establish a virtual adoption program to support horses while they await adoption
6. Request For Proposals for private partners for small holding centers

Recommendation 4: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends the formation of Advisory Board-formed Resources Working Group and that Dr. Boyd Spratling, Gary Zakotnik, Paul Durbin, Jim Stephenson, and Callie Hendrickson serve as members. The purpose of the working group is to look at the resource itself, the interaction of the horses and burros and the habitat and make pertinent recommendations.

Recommendation 5: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends a quick initiation of the review process for ovariectomy as a population growth suppression tool based on their recommendation from the previous Board meeting.

Recommendation 6: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board resubmits a previous recommendation that eco-sanctuaries should not be considered on public HMA lands where horses currently exist.

Miscellaneous – closing comments

Report to Congress

There was a question from the Board asking about the status of the Report to Congress. Since there will be a new Secretary of the Interior as well as a new BLM Director, the document is now waiting for new management to be installed. The Report to Congress remains a draft.

Possibility of long term holding facility selling horses for slaughter - Spur livestock

The BLM drafted a public response to this issue and it will be posted on the BLM site called "From the Public".

Future Meetings

While there was a recommendation to set up a regular schedule for the meetings, it was decided not to schedule the next meeting due to budget and sequestration concerns. Discussion also focused on selecting a city that is the most cost effective and close to an HMA.

Meeting Adjournment

The meeting was formally adjourned at 12:02 PM.

Population Growth Suppression Alternative

Sept 10, 2012

BLM Advisory Board Recommendation on Population Growth Suppression

The Crisis: The numbers of horses in holding has ballooned to the point it consumed 59% of the FY 2012 WHB budget and threatens the viability of the health and welfare of the horses and the entire program. This is economically unsustainable. The GAO Study highlighted the need for changes to reduce the number of horses in holding. An alternative to removing horses from the range is to reduce the population growth potential therefore stabilizing populations on the range. There is an immediate need for additional and effective tools for population control.

Background: The BLM has been tasked with managing wild horses and burros on public lands in approximately 178 designated Herd Management Areas throughout 11 western states. The overwhelming challenge facing the BLM in regard to managing the wild horse and burro populations on public land has been and will continue to be population growth suppression of the herds. This population growth control is necessary due to the delicate ecological balance required on many of the rangelands where these wild horses and burros roam. This has been done in the past by gathering wild equids using mostly helicopter gathers and removing the horses and burros from the rangelands. This is expensive and very stressful on the animals. It attracts a lot of criticism by horse advocates and is a very expensive technique. Herein lays the challenge. How to keep populations at a healthy genetic and social level for the horses and burros as well as healthy levels for the rangelands and still allow the horses and burros to live as natural and undisturbed as possible? This challenge is compounded by several factors.

- The high costs associated with techniques used currently. Specifically;

- Helicopter gathers to address AML
- Administration of PZP and PZP-22 fertility control drugs
- Housing and care of excess horses in STH facilities (35%)
- Housing and care of horses in LTH facilities (24%)
- Cost studying future fertility control products
- Products now under consideration are expensive and not readily available for widespread use due to slow approval processes by the regulatory agencies charged with oversight.
 - Widespread use of SpayVac could be delayed years into the future.
- Currently used products such as PZP22 do not fulfill the needs of the WHB program. With expected duration of effectiveness to be about two years, re-administration and related gather of horses would be expensive and result in additional stress to the horses.
- The need to repeatedly and regularly gather horses to administer fertility control drugs.
- The recurrent costs (planning, re-gather, & administration of Immunocontraception) in monetary terms as well as the resulting stress on the animals.
- Bands of horses are intermingled.
- The costs of removal of animals from their home rangelands in excess of AML.
- The resulting costs of housing the animals removed from HMA's
- The costs of staff, maintenance and operations associated with the planning documents, management of the overpopulated HMAs, and the costs of operating various holding facilities for the excess horses and burros.
- The negative press associated with gather activity from horse and burro advocates and the legal fees resultant from law suits filed to stop gather activity by the BLM.
- Conflicting multiple use of public land i.e. wildlife, mining, ranching, recreation, hunting, watershed values with the needs of the horses and burros.

With the above considerations, a long lasting, immediately available alternative would be of value. Therefore, this proposal will focus on a surgical procedure as a

proposed population growth suppression method and explore the possible benefits it offers as well as the potential drawbacks. The procedure is called an Ovariectomy

Ovariectomy of Mares as a method of Population Growth Suppression in Wild horse and Burro herds

An Ovariectomy is a relatively simple surgical procedure that removes the ovaries from a mare. Ovaries produce eggs for reproduction. They also produce the hormonal process that causes estrous and the subsequent stallion breeding stimulation that results from the stimulus of the estrous cycle. The ovariectomy procedure has been performed for many years and there are accepted protocols for its utilization and implementation. It has a proven track record with several potential beneficial results toward achieving AML and could work to alleviate over population as well as herd structure disruption in HMAs.

The procedure is simple and is safe to perform in the field. Its costs are comparable to a single dose of PZP with NO need to handle the mare again in her natural lifetime. Ovariectomy is a one-time procedure and unlike fertility control drugs, does NOT have to be repeated. It eliminates the need to repeatedly gather horses simply to implement fertility control measures to individual animals.

One criticism of a permanent procedure such as ovariectomy is the potential loss of genetic viability within the genetic pool of any given population. Allowing a mare to have 2, 3 even more foals before the Ovariectomy procedure is administered would address that issue. The use of Ovariectomy would be restricted to use in older mares that have had an opportunity to contribute their genetic uniqueness to the herd structure. The optimum age to apply this measure would have to be determined and may vary from HMA to HMA or from band to band. Priority candidates could be identified by a scientific panel which would include geneticists, surgeons and others.

Benefits of Ovariectomy versus growth suppression drugs

An Ovariectomy would stop estrous so that mares would no longer be fertile. They would also no longer come into an estrous cycle and attract breeding activity. This will dramatically reduce injury potential to the mare as well as the resultant injury risks to stallions. Stallions are commonly injured by mares while breeding as well as in battles with other stallions over mares in estrous. A major drawback of PZP is that while it disrupts fertility in mares, it does not stop the estrous cycle. The resultant constant breeding cycle creates havoc within the herd band and subjects the mare to repeated breeding and a higher risk of injury.

Allowing the younger mares to have foals will help keep herd structure intact and NOT disrupt the bands. The older mares would remain in the herd as valuable members of the herd. Their acquired knowledge base would stay intact with the herd health benefiting from their continued presence and guidance in day to day activities as well as knowledge of resources such as forage and water.

The herds would all still have a reproducing element but the overall reproduction rate of the herd band would be much lower and the need to have gathers would be greatly reduced.

The removal of a mare from the breeding cycle would also allow for the older mares to live a less stressful life. As mares age, they are increasingly drawn down physically by the repeated process of gestation and nursing. Taking them out of that process as they age will allow for a better quality of life for these mares.

Gather Changes

In selected HMA's, water and or bait traps should be utilized to gather horses and burros. This method is much less stressful on horses and the gather activity can be done by in house staff rather than outside contractors. This gives a better level of quality control as well as lower costs to BLM. There are other benefits as well.

- Horses could be trapped in their individual bands
 - This would allow band structure to be noted by staff and decisions on band size adjustment more easily made.
 - Staff becomes familiar with individual and band dynamics. Understanding these aspects will make for better staff decisions in regard to herd management practices.

- Bands would not be mingled with other bands. Avoiding the resultant confusion and disruption of band continuity that result with gather techniques currently used.
- Band and individual records could be developed. This info could prove invaluable over time to develop Herd Management Plans that will benefit the range, the herds and individual animals.
- Much lower costs for management of populations than current methods.
 - Eventual elimination or downsizing of most holding facilities. Excess horse removal numbers would be much easier to match to adoption demand requiring far fewer resources.
 - Freeze brand on mares with ovariectomy would eliminate the need to handle them in the field.
 - Herds would only have to be handled by a few individuals rather than a large crew during management operations.
 - As the younger mares age, an occasional hands on operation to perform ovariectomies or remove a few horses would be done by in house staff at the trap site rather than by mass gather and transport to remote facility. This would be a much less expensive process and less stressful and disruptive to the animals.
 - Individual animals selected for specific study in the wild could be easily microchipped at these in house gathers for positive ID in future field studies.
- Other potential benefits of this proposed program
 - Water and bait traps can be built with assistance of concerned citizens and advocate volunteer corps
 - This volunteer process would allow these folks to participate in making a positive change for the horses and burros. Enhancing the image of BLM
 - Observation points at trap areas could also be utilized by these same people or university groups for individual or group study of horses, burros and band dynamics.
 - Using volunteers who are concerned about the health and welfare of wild equids, the BLM can create an opportunity to embrace the groups

and people who have traditionally been at odds with the BLM and their policies.

Concerns

There will always be concerns and drawbacks to any procedure that interferes with natural selection. Just by interfering with the natural selection process will be objectionable to some. But the mandate of the BLM requires the agency to maintain healthy rangelands for all users of public lands. Horses, burros, wildlife, ranching, recreational use, mining, etc., all have to be considered.

With any surgical procedure there is always some risk. Whether it is from sedation or complication from the surgical procedure itself, surgery is never 100% safe. However, the ovariectomy procedure has a long standing history of being an effective and relatively safe procedure that absolutely controls fertility and could be a valuable tool in population growth suppression in the management of wild horse and burro herds on public land. It has long been used in the race horse industry to control erratic estrous issues in athlete horses. The overall costs could be considerably less than with the administration of PZP and PZP 22 in both monetary terms and dramatically reduce stress and disruption of herd bands.

In evaluating the ovariectomy procedure as an alternative in population growth suppression, the possibility and feasibility of developing a laparoscopic ovariectomy procedure is currently being explored. The potential laparoscopic procedure has been discussed with a veterinary university program. They have expressed an interest in exploring the development of this approach. The possible benefits of simplifying the ovariectomy procedure would be reduction in recovery time and complications, easy implementation in the field by contract veterinarians, improvement in safety for the animals and staff as well as lower monetary costs associated with the field application of this procedure. No specific procedure or approach would be identified as the standard.

Another potential issue would be aftercare and observation of mares after the procedure has been performed. In a water or bait trap gather, the animals could be easily monitored for an amount of time required to ensure a better recovery rate before release back to the rangelands.

Some will have objections to the permanence of a surgical procedure. One advantage of a permanent procedure would be to eliminate or greatly reduce the frequency and/or the necessity to gather and handle the horses and burros that have received the surgery. At the very least, using water and bait trapping, animals that have had the procedure would be clearly marked by freeze brand so handling at the trap site could be kept to a minimum. Genetic viability would be addressed through scientific prioritization of age class to be spayed.

Summary

The potential to reduce the reproductive rate of the herds while allowing every mare to contribute her unique genetic material to the herds is a dynamic element in this proposal. Using ovariectomy as a population suppressant is a departure from the protocols currently in place. We believe that this change of direction is a viable alternative to practices currently in use with great potential to benefit the horses, BLM and the rangelands.

- It reduces costs.
- It is a one-time procedure.
- It reduces stress on individual animals, bands and HMAs.
- It allows for the preservation of a natural band structure with little interference by humans.
- When interaction with humans is required, due to the lower frequency needed, it will be considerably less invasive and disruptive to the herd bands. If gather is by water or bait trapping, this would be markedly less!
- It will allow easier study access so the protocols can be tweaked to suit individual band and range needs.
- It embraces horse advocates and concerned citizens who wish to participate in a positive process of change for the horses and burros under BLM jurisdiction.
- It may reduce gather injuries and deaths that occur in current gather activities.

Co-chairs

Boyd M. Spratling DVM

Julie Gleason