

**Questions and Answers**  
**BLM Fiscal Year 2014 Wild Horse and Burro Removal Schedule**

**Q. Will the BLM be conducting wild horse and burro gathers in FY 2014?**

A. Yes, however, limits on the program's budget and on the number of additional horses and burros we can hold mean that removals will be limited. The BLM is facing challenges that affect nearly every aspect of the wild horse program: increasing on- and off-range populations, increasing costs, declining adoptions and sales and decreasing space for long-term holding.

**Q. How many animals will you be removing?**

A. We have approved the removal of about 2,400 animals through the end of fiscal year 2014. States have been allocated a limited number of horses to gather during this summer (through September 30, 2014). We determined this number by considering a variety of factors, including the State's existing wild horse and burro populations and range conditions, the presence of wild horses on private lands, and court-ordered gathers. Requests for emergency removals during the remainder of the year will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Q. How will the BLM conduct these operations?**

A. The gathers will be done in accordance with the agency's animal welfare standards adopted last year, and other guidelines. In January 2013, BLM issued four Instruction Memoranda regarding gather operations, comprehensive animal welfare standards, internal communications, managing by Incident Command, and public and media management. Depending on various factors, including the size of the gather area, the terrain, and water availability, the BLM will use helicopters or bait/water trapping to gather the animals.

**Q. How can the BLM authorize any gathers at all when it doesn't have holding space for the animals?**

A. The BLM remains committed to the health and welfare of wild horses and burros. We are also committed to sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for multiple uses, as mandated by the Wild Horses and Burros Act of 1971 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. We have carefully analyzed our existing holding situation, the potential for adding additional holding facilities, and expected turnover of horses currently in holding through adoptions and sales of trained and untrained animals.

**Q Does the BLM anticipate adding to holding space?**

A. Yes, we hope to gain more holding space to help us accommodate these animals. We issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for additional short-term holding space in the Midwest and Western United States in late April, and similar requests for space in the East are in process. We are also developing proposals to expand long-term holding space in the Midwest, West and the East.

**Q. How will the BLM ensure that its gather polices are consistently administered across the states?**

A. We have worked hard to ensure parity among the states in determining these numbers. Absent compelling circumstances outside the agency's control, the BLM will not be altering its gather allocations among the states.

**Q What will the BLM do if there is legal action compelling gathers?**

A. The BLM will do its best to respond to court orders. We will still have to consider the availability of appropriated funding to conduct gathers and the availability of holding space in the timing of those gathers.

**Q. Will the BLM haul water and feed to animals threatened by dehydration and starvation?**

A. The health of wild horse and burro populations will likely decline in areas hardest hit by the drought and where severe wildfire has resulted in loss of forage. We will consider water and feed hauling on a case-by-case basis.

**Q. Will the BLM euthanize animals on the range in near-death conditions?**

A. Yes, animals may be euthanized as an act of mercy if necessary to end their suffering. Animals that decline to near-death condition as a result of the lack of forage and water resources, and have a poor prognosis for recovery or improvement in condition will be euthanized on the range.

**Q. Why don't you simply eliminate cattle grazing in HMAs?**

A. By law, including both the Wild Horses and Burros Act of 1971 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the BLM manages the public lands for "multiple use and sustained yield," – which means that the BLM is required to manage for a variety of uses that includes livestock grazing as well as healthy wildlife habitat. Many livestock permittees have already taken voluntary steps to significantly reduce the number of cattle grazing on public lands as a result of drought.

**Q. Horse ownership is declining across the United States and so are adoptions. What is BLM doing to adjust to this situation?**

A. While BLM has successfully placed more than 230,000 excess wild horses and burros into good homes through its adoption and sales programs since 1971, adoptions have not kept pace with removals and adoption numbers per year continue to decline. We have analyzed our adoption numbers in relation to the larger question surrounding the demand for horses in the United States. We see the greatest interest in adopting animals that have already been gentled and are pursuing new opportunities to train greater numbers of horses and burros, including the use of state and federal criminal justice systems that offer inmate training programs.

**Q. What are you doing to come up with alternatives to the agency's traditional gather and hold approach to wild horse and burro population management?**

A. To address population growth challenges over the long-term, the BLM is seeking research proposals to develop new or improve existing ways of managing the population growth of wild horses and burros on public lands in the West. PZP, a contraception for wild horse mares, is effective in a small number of areas where the animals are approachable, identifiable and can be readily treated every year. However, the BLM's current request for proposals seeks to improve existing tools, identify new contraception methods, or new ways to spay or neuter wild horses and burros. The BLM is also considering exercising its authority through the America Competes Act to encourage innovation from citizen problem-solvers to help us find solutions to the wild horse and burro overpopulation problem.

**Q. If you are spending almost all of your budget on holding costs, where will this research funding come from?**

A. The fiscal year 2014 budget included \$2 million for research and the President's Budget request of \$80.2 million in fiscal year 2015 includes a \$2.8 million increase for implementation of National Academy of Science recommendations for population growth suppression research.