

Questions and Answers about the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR) Gather

How can the BLM blame wild horses for impacts to vegetation on the range when it cannot assess which species are responsible for eating which vegetation and when it has failed to make range improvements and develop water sources that would delay wild horse use from areas that are deemed to become overgrazed in the spring?

The NRCS 2004 Survey and Assessment along with the PMWHR Evaluation 2008 clearly documented the contributing factors to the current ecological conditions. None of these documents identified wild horses as the only cause, but a significant contributing factor. Current litigation by the Cloud Foundation and Front Range Equine Rescue has delayed the development of new water projects identified in the 2009 Herd Management Area Plan.

Why has the BLM failed to take into consideration that precipitation since 2006 has improved range conditions, and consequently, the ability of the range to support a larger wild horse population?

The BLM recognizes that increased precipitation often has a direct effect on yearly production and with more moisture more production does tend to occur. However, the BLM has no information that shows a change in plant species composition has occurred from precipitation levels in 2007, 2008, and 2009. According to the Western Regional Climate Center Data precipitation levels for Lovell Wyoming in 2007 were at the 30 year average and in 2008 slightly below the 30 year average at 96%. For 2009 the NRCS Basin Wide Precipitation Summary for Shoshone Mountain and Valley (represents the northern Bighorn Basin) indicate for the water year to date is anywhere from 84% to 111% of average. Although this is more moisture than in the past years, management, grazing patterns and improvements has not changed the on ground situation, thus it would be extremely unlikely to have an upward change in ecological condition in the areas of the PMWHR documented as being negatively impacted. Conversely NRCS and the BLM's studies clearly document the stable to slightly upward trends in the mid-slope areas of the PMWHR.

Can the public watch the gather?

During the day while gather and preparation activities are occurring, the public can watch the gather operations 50 yards from the trap site. On September 7th -8th all members of the public were given a tour of the holding pens.

Are there any designated observers for the public at the trap site?

There are several designated observers representing wild horse advocates and the general public. Matt Dillon, Executive Director of the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center, is watching, helping identify horses and updating his blog each day on what he has observed. Here is the link: http://www.pryormustangs.org/mustang_blog.shtml.

Other designated observers include Tom Dillon, Janet Jankura, Dr. Vern Dooley, and Elyse Gardner

Are the horses and their foals being run long distances to the trap sites?

Horses are being herded slowly and carefully to ensure the well being of all horses and all foals. Several young foals have been gathered without incident. One trap site has been moved closer to the higher elevation so that it is within two miles of the horses' range.

Are members of Cloud's herd being removed?

A few members of Cloud's band are being removed. Among the horses that are returned to the range, there needs to be a balance in the genes and bloodlines that remain. Cloud's offspring and bloodline can't be allowed to dominate the herd. The herd's genetic makeup needs to include a mix of different bloodlines to maintain herd health. Cloud will not be removed.

Why does the BLM use helicopters to gather horses?

Helicopter assisted gather operations have proven to be more humane, effective and efficient than other gather methods when larger numbers of animals need to be removed over large acreages or rugged terrain. Helicopters are able to move horses and burros at a pace which assures that the animals arrive at the trap site in good condition. The helicopter pilot can keep mares and foals together better than a rider on horseback and can also move the animals around barriers such as deep ravines, fences, or roads.

Why are you allowing a federally indicted and convicted contractor to gather the horses?

Dave Cattoor has met all Federal regulations necessary to contract with the Federal Government. The BLM technical criteria for contracts specify that the contractor must certify that none of their employees have been convicted on animal cruelty charges. Mr. Cattoor has never been convicted of animal cruelty. He pled guilty to a misdemeanor count of "Use of Aircraft to Capture Wild Horses" on May 22, 1992, an incident that occurred while his company was performing work for the Duckwater Indian Tribe in Nevada. Tribe members who were involved in the same legal case were later found innocent of all charges stemming from the incident.

Cattoor Livestock Roundup has been gathering and removing horses under contract for the BLM since 1975. Cattoor Livestock Roundup has consistently demonstrated its ability to safely, effectively, and humanely capture and handle wild horses and burros.

Does the BLM use whips to move the horses through the pens and chute? The BLM uses flags or noise making paddles to move horses through the pens and chutes. The flags are usually made by attaching a plastic grocery bag to the end of a sorting stick or buggy whip. The flag prevents the stick or whip from hitting the horse with any sort of impact or sting to it. Seeing and hearing the plastic flag is what motivates the animal to move away from the source of the stimulus. This technique is similar to those used for domestic and wild horses being trained using resistance free methods.

Was the veterinarian at the chute poking foals with a stick for no reason?

The picture circulated on the Internet that shows a veterinarian scratching the rump of a foal in a chute is just that. Holding a broken flag lightly in his finger tips he is using the soft rubber on the handle end to scratch a foal while it stands in the chute. On several occasions this helped to calm a fractious young animal and decrease the likelihood it would injure itself in the chute. It was clear to the other people on site the foal was enjoying the distraction, and there was certainly no abuse or mistreatment involved. Close examination of the picture gives no indication anyone is

poking or abusing the animals. Allegations of this nature are a gross exaggeration of the events designed simply to stir controversy and create trouble for those who are working to assist the BLM in their efforts to manage and protect America's wild horses and burros.

Does the BLM treat mares with fertility control?

The BLM has promoted and supported the development of an effective contraceptive agent for wild horses since 1978. The most promising agent is a Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP) vaccine that was developed in the 1990s, but is not commercially available. PZP is used by the BLM under an investigational new animal drug exemption issued by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

How does PZP affect the mare?

The PZP application doesn't interfere with a mare's pregnancy if the vaccine is applied while she is pregnant. The foal will be born normal and healthy. The PZP vaccine will start to take effect while the mare is pregnant, so after the foal is born, the mare will be less likely to become pregnant for about the next two years.

Indications from research conducted on Assateague Island National Seashore suggest that PZP does not affect the foaling seasonality. While it remains to be seen if this will hold true on Western rangelands, there is no indication that there are any negative effects on foal survival following treatment of a herd.

Why is the BLM removing horses that are in good shape?

The mandate of the BLM is to ensure that healthy herds can thrive on healthy rangelands. Removing horses while their body condition is in relatively good shape allows the BLM to manage the herds before range conditions further deteriorate.

How does Skyline Uranium Corporation relate to the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range?

Skyline Uranium Corporation and other possible uranium mining companies do not have anything to do with the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. The area mined in the past is not on the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range and the entire area of the range is withdrawn from mineral entry as part of management prescriptions for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) status.

Why does the BLM continue to gather animals when there are already so many horses in holding?

The estimated current free-roaming population exceeds by some 10,350 the number that the BLM has determined can exist in balance with other public rangeland resources and uses. The appropriate management level is approximately 26,600.

The BLM estimates that nearly 37,000 wild horses and burros (approximately 33,100 horses and 3,800 burros) are roaming on BLM-managed rangelands in 10 Western states based on the latest data available, as of February 28, 2009. Wild horses and burros have virtually no natural predators and their herd sizes can double about every four years. As a result, the agency must remove thousands of animals from the range each year to control herd sizes.

Off the range, there are nearly 32,000 other wild horses and burros that are fed and cared for at short-term corrals and on long-term pastures. (As of August 2009, there were approximately 9,500 in short-term corrals and 22,250 in long-term pastures.) To view long-term pastures, please visit http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/wild_horse_and_burro/wh_b_information_center/Fact_Sheet.html

All wild horses and burros in holding, like those roaming the public rangelands, are protected by the BLM under the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act.

What happens to horses that are not adopted on September 26 at Britton Springs adoption event?

Horses not adopted on September 26 (National Wild Horse Adoption Day) will be available for adoption at a future Internet Adoption. The BLM is also talking with groups interested in purchasing older horses for lifetime care. If you are interested in adopting, please contact 866-4MUSTANGS (866-468-7826) for information on how to adopt or visit www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov.

Why isn't the BLM waiting for ROAM legislation to pass?

Federal agencies enforce existing laws. The BLM manages, protects, and controls wild horses and burros under the authority of the [1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act](#) (as amended by Congress in 1976, 1978, 1996, and 2004). This law authorizes the BLM to remove excess wild horses and burros from the range to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands. The ROAM legislation has not yet passed into law. The BLM is not authorized to wait to wait to see if the ROAM legislation passes into law. If, or when it does, the BLM will comply with whatever provisions may be included in the new laws protecting wild horses and burros.

In accordance with the [1976 Federal Land Policy and Management Act](#), the Bureau manages wild horses and burros as part of this multiple-use mandate for the Nation's public lands and natural resources.

Why are you ignoring Madeleine Pickens and her plan?

The BLM is committed to continuing discussions with Mrs. Pickens. Mrs. Pickens' more recent proposal seeks a BLM stipend of \$500 per horse, per year for the life of each horse. Under this plan, Mrs. Pickens' foundation would first take about 10,000 wild horses currently in BLM short-term holding corrals, the costs of which are significantly greater to the BLM than those of keeping horses in long-term pastures. To realize these potential savings to the BLM and the taxpayer, however, Mrs. Pickens' sanctuary plan would need to meet certain requirements for wild horse management.

First, Mrs. Pickens' plan to care for these animals at \$500 per horse, per year is similar to the long-term holding contracts that the BLM currently has with private landowners in the Midwest, where about 22,000 unadopted or unsold animals are cared for at an annual cost of about \$475 per horse. The animals graze on private pastures in Oklahoma, Kansas, and South Dakota, where forage and water are abundant. In contrast to these *annual* contracts, Mrs. Pickens has asked the

BLM to commit to *lifetime* payments. Because Congress appropriates the agency's funding on an annual basis, the BLM is not authorized to make such an unlimited commitment.

Second, Mrs. Pickens' plan proposes to take the animals from private pastures and facilities and instead graze them on private and *public* lands on a large ranch in Nevada. However, current Federal law prohibits the BLM from using allotments associated with that ranch for grazing wild horses. The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act restricts animals to the areas where they were found roaming when the Act was passed in 1971. Unfortunately, none of the BLM grazing allotments that Mrs. Pickens proposes for her sanctuary were areas where wild horses roamed in 1971.

Why does the BLM favor cattle and sheep over wild horses?

The BLM does not favor livestock over wild horses. The BLM is mandated by law to carry out a multiple-use mission that accommodates a variety of public land uses while protecting the land's resources. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public land.

Do you send horses to slaughter?

The BLM has not sold any wild horses or burros to slaughterhouses or to "killer buyers."