

## Healthy Rangeland and Wild Horses

*Keeping the range healthy is one of BLM's goals.*

This photo, taken in the Salt Wells area in June, shows healthy rangeland as it starts to green up. Notice the sparseness of the plants. This is normal for Wyoming, which averages only 12.97 inches of rain a year. Compare this to Kentucky which averages 48.98.



This photo was taken in a different location in July. The elevation of this area is around 8,000 feet. June was cooler this year, causing the grasses to seed out later than usual. The grass height in the un-grazed area is about 16 inches tall. Some of the grasses found in the area include: Western wheatgrass, junegrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, squirreltail and bluegrass. The grazed height was less than 2 inches, which is heavy utilization. Continued grazing without gathering excess horses will result in range degradation, poor plant health and decrease plant species and composition.



This photo shows the same area in late August. The grass is shorter, there are fewer seed stalks remaining and the area has received severe utilization. The grass height is approximately one inch.



This photo shows a large number of horses in the area. A reservoir is nearby, accounting for more than one band of animals in the area. The forage in July is at its peak nutritional value and therefore the animals are in healthy condition. This area has shown to be 89 percent utilization level.

The key species appear to have been heavily utilized and there are indications of repeated use. There is no evidence of reproduction or current seedstalks. Continued use by wild horses above the AML would result in range degradation, decreased water quality, and a change in plant composition.

This area is used by wild horses and antelope.



For more information: <http://www.blm.gov/wy> BLM WSO September 2010