



On-Range Branch Highlights for

2021 Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Meeting, June 30-July 1

Gather Schedule: The FY2021 gather schedule includes planned removals of just over 10,000 animals and more than 2,100 fertility control treatments. The BLM's goal is to continue increasing management efforts to reduce overpopulation to achieve and maintain appropriate management level in more herd management areas (HMAs). The schedule for FY2021, as well as the schedule under development for FY2022, are consistent with the target removal goals included in the BLM's Report to Congress issued May, 2020. The BLM prioritizes gathers based on applicability of fertility control treatments, litigation, public safety, impacts to private property, protecting priority wildlife habitat, addressing chronic resource conditions and supporting cross-cutting projects such as wildland fire rehabilitation and outcome-based grazing. The On-Range Branch coordinates closely with BLM State Offices and HQ to develop and maintain the schedule throughout the year.

Fertility Control: The BLM continues to work towards implementing more fertility control treatments to slow growth in wild horse and burro herds. The BLM prioritizes fertility control treatments in herds that are close to or at appropriate management level, and it has treated or plans to treat wild horses and burros in 26 HMAs in FY2021. When possible, the BLM combines fertility control treatments with gather efforts.

Increasing field darting in HMAs where it can be effective remains a priority. Field darting programs are best suited to accessible HMAs with approachable animals that can be tracked and documented on an annual basis. Often with the help of numerous organizations and volunteers, the BLM is supporting or plans to support field-darting operations in 10 HMAs this year.

In addition to traditional forms of fertility control such as Zonastat-H (PZP) and PZP-22, the BLM is increasing its use of GonaCon, which has shown signs of remaining effective at preventing pregnancy for multiple years. The BLM increased GonaCon use by 171 percent in FY2020, and plans to continue using GonaCon in the years to come.

Notice of Funding Opportunity: On April 19, the BLM released a Notice of Funding Opportunity to provide a consistent and streamlined process for community partners such as states, tribes, other federal agencies and non-profit organizations to work with BLM offices on the management and protection of wild horses and burros. The Funding Opportunity is intended to support public-private partnerships for a wide range of activities in the Wild Horse and Burro Program, including on-range activities such as fertility control darting efforts, as well as assistance with gathers and making improvements to the range. The Funding Opportunity closed May 28 and the BLM is currently reviewing proposals.

Research: The BLM has been supporting a number of fertility control and other wild horse and burro-related research projects. Data collection concluded in FY2020 and FY2021 for some major fertility control projects. One of those was an experimental test of Y-shaped silicone intrauterine device (IUD) safety and efficacy, in a pasture trial in Oklahoma, with domestic horses. Another is a pen trial of an oocyte growth factor vaccine. A third was a field trial which assessed gelding effects, in the wild. Scientific papers on those study results are forthcoming. Methods that been shown by research to be humane, safe, and effective are being increasingly used in BLM management without any experimental element, such as application of the GonaCon vaccine and Y-shaped silicone IUDs.



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In FY2021 the BLM intends to prepare a ‘request for proposals,’ soliciting fertility control research that would total up to \$1M of new funding, to be awarded in FY22. The BLM is working on an updated strategic research plan for the Wild Horse and Burro Program. More details on the research program are included separately in these materials for the board.