



Visitation Protocol and Ground Rules for Helicopter WH&B Gathers within Nevada



BLM recognizes and respects the right of interested members of the public and the press to observe the wild horse and burro gathers. At the same time, BLM must ensure the health and safety of the public, BLM's employees and contractors, and America's wild horses. Accordingly, BLM developed these rules to maximize the opportunity for reasonable public access to the gather while ensuring that BLM's health and safety responsibilities are fulfilled. Failure to maintain safe distances from operations at the gather and temporary holding sites could result in members of the public inadvertently getting in the path of the wild horses or gather personnel, thereby placing themselves and others at risk, or causing stress and potential injury to the wild horses and burros.

The BLM and the contractor's helicopter pilot must comply with 14 CFR Part 91 of the Federal Aviation Regulations, which determines the minimum safe altitudes and distance people must be from the aircraft. To be in compliance with these regulations, the viewing location at the gather site and holding corrals must be approximately 500 feet from the operating location of the helicopter at all times. The viewing locations may vary depending on topography, terrain and other factors.

General Daily Protocol

- A Wild Horse Gather Info Phone Line will be set up prior to the gather so the public can call for daily updates on gather information and statistics. Visitors are strongly encouraged to check the phone line the evening before they plan to attend the gather to confirm the gather and their tour of it is indeed taking place the next day as scheduled (weather, mechanical or other issues may affect the ability to gather on a given day) and to confirm the meeting location.
- Visitors must direct their questions/comments to either their designated BLM representative or the BLM spokesperson on site, and not seek to engage with other BLM/contractor staff as this can disrupt their gather duties/responsibilities and ability to operate safely. Professional and respectful behavior is expected of all. BLM may make the BLM staff available during down times for a Q&A session on public-observation days. However, the contractor and its staff will not be available to answer questions or interact with visitors.
- Observers must provide their own 4-wheel drive high clearance vehicle, appropriate shoes, winter clothing, food and water. Federal rules prohibit observers from riding in government and contractor vehicles and equipment.
- Gather operations may be suspended if bad weather conditions create unsafe flying

conditions.

- BLM will identify a public/media viewing location that allows the public the best vantage point from which to see the helicopter gather operations and captured wild horses or burros based on the specific geographic and physical characteristics of the trap site and safety. The observation area will be delineated with marking tape or screening materials. This viewing location would be as close and as unobstructed as possible to the trap pens while taking into account gather efficiency and safety, and BLM will endeavor to find an elevated location for public/media viewing purposes that is not more than a quarter mile from the trap when feasible and as close as 500 feet as feasible. The designation and use of observation areas is necessary due to the use and presence of heavy equipment and aircraft in the gather operation and the critical need to allow BLM personnel and contractors to fully focus on attending to the needs of the wild horses and burros while maintaining a safe environment for all involved. In addition, observation areas will be sited so as to protect the wild horses and burros from being spooked, startled or impacted in a manner that results in increased stress.
- All observers will be advised that proper conduct must be followed including: no movement during capture, speaking will only be permitted in low voices and not at the time of capture, any and all restrictions on movement must be followed. Observers will be advised that failure to follow the rules will result in immediate removal of the non-compliant individual(s) to ensure safety of BLM employees, contractors and the wild horses and burros.
- BLM will identify a public/media viewing location that allows viewers to see the captured wild horses or burros within the temporary holding area. An elevated location (e.g., hill, platform) will be provided, whenever feasible, at no greater than 30 feet from the perimeter of the temporary holding area with a clear view of the processing chute. The expectation is that an elevated viewing location will generally be available. Viewing locations would be as close as possible to the captured horses or burros while taking into account safety, disturbance to the captured animals and sorting operation needs.
- When the number of public/media observers is small in number (e.g., 2-4 observers in total), and with the concurrence of the Incident Commander and contractor, the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) may when appropriate provide closer viewing opportunities of the trap-site on a case by case basis, after the COR has determined that no helicopter or loading activities will occur for a minimum of 45 minutes or if gather operations have concluded for the day so long as any wild horses or burros remaining in the trap have settled down and such viewing opportunities will not result in increased stress to the gathered horses or burros, interfere with the gather activities, or pose a risk to BLM employee, contractor, or observer safety, and efforts will be made to provide an opportunity to view wild horses or burros in the trap at a range of as close as 30 feet if feasible.
- Visitors will be assigned to a specific BLM representative and must stay with that representative at all times.

- Visitors are NOT permitted to walk around the gather site or temporary holding facility unaccompanied by a BLM representative.
- Observers are prohibited from climbing/trespassing onto or in the trucks, equipment or corrals, which is the private property of the contractor.
- When BLM is using a helicopter or other heavy equipment in close proximity to a designated observation area, members of the public may be asked to stay by their vehicle for some time before being directed to an observation area once the use of the helicopter or the heavy machinery is complete.
- When given the signal that the helicopter is close to the gather site bringing horses in, visitors must sit down in areas specified by BLM representatives and must not move or talk as the horses are guided into the corral.
- Individuals attempting to move outside a designated observation area will be directed to move back to the designated area or to leave the site. Failure to do so may result in citation or arrest. It is important to stay within the designated observation area to safely observe the wild horse gather.
- Observers will be polite, professional and respectful to BLM managers and staff and the contractor/employees. Visitors who do not cooperate and follow the rules will be escorted off the gather site by BLM law enforcement personnel, and will be unable to participate in subsequent observation days during the gather.
- To the extent possible, an opportunity will be provided for the public and media observers to give feedback on the gather via the public affairs officer (PAO) who will route any comments and concerns to the gather's IC or authorized officer (AO) to consider and/or address. As appropriate, the PAO will follow-up with members of the public and media who have made comments or expressed concern to provide a response or resolution.
- BLM reserves the right to modify these rules based on changes in circumstances that may pose a risk to health, public safety or the safety of wild horses (such as weather, lightning, wildfire, etc.).