

## **Questions and Answers for the FY2024 Marietta HMA Wild Burro Gather**

***Q. What is the official name for this gather?***

**A.** 2024 Marietta Wild Burro Gather

***Q. Where and how will we know when to go and where to meet each day?***

**A.** All media and/or visitors wanting to go to the observation gather site will need to call the Marietta Wild Burro Gather information hotline” at 775-885-6101 prior to 5:30 p.m. daily, for meeting times as the time and location to meet is subject to change.

***Q. Will there be any designated public observers at the gather site locations?***

**A.** Yes.

A PAO and other gather staff will meet the public each morning at a specified location and time to escort them to the gather sites. Limitations will only be imposed to ensure safety and accomplishment of the mission. The “Visitation Protocol” and a “Know Before You Go” handout will also be posted on the BLM website, so observers are adequately prepared for the conditions on the gather sites.

***Q. What Contractor will be used for this Gather?***

**A.** Cattoor Contracting

***Q. How much will this gather cost?***

**A.** The costs for the gather will be calculated at the end of the gather.

***Q. Why is this gather necessary?***

**A.** To restore a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship on public lands, consistent with the provisions of Section 1333(b) of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. The BLM strives to be a good neighbor in the communities we serve; ensuring public safety within and outside of the HMAs is not at risk due to the overpopulation of wild horses and burros and providing opportunities for other wildlife to have a thriving ecosystem.

The Marietta Burro Range is overpopulated, and animal conditions are declining due to range degradation and lack of sustainable food resources. Regular monitoring has occurred in the complex to observe wild horse body condition and range and water conditions. Dependent on the location within Marietta HMA animals body conditions have been observed in the range of 2-3.

***Q. How many horses and burros will be gathered and how many will be removed from the range?***

**A.** The BLM will gather up to 31 excess wild horses and 290 wild burros and remove up to 31 excess wild horses and 290 wild burros.

***Q. Will the BLM implement any population suppression techniques? If so, what method or fertility control drug will be used and how many animals will be treated and released?***

**A.** No

***Q. What will the remaining herd population of this herd management area be?***

**A.** 97 wild burros

***Q. How far, in relation to the trap site, are the animals and foals being herded?***

**A.** . BLM Nevada's operation plan is no more than eight to ten miles.

***Q. Why is the BLM removing animals that appear to be or are in good condition?***

**A.** The BLM gathers animals with different body conditions, including some that appear to be or are in good condition. The agency pro-actively gathers excess animals from overpopulated herds on a three-to-five-year cycle to prevent worst-case scenarios.

***Q. Does the BLM use whips to move the animals through the pens and chute?***

**A.** The BLM may use flags or noise-making paddles to move animals 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 animal with any sort of impact or sting to it. Seeing and hearing the plastic flag motivates the animal to move away from the source of the stimulus. This technique is similar to those used for domestic animals being trained using resistance-free methods.

***Q. Why is the BLM removing animal?***

**A.** The BLM must remove thousands of wild horses and burros from the range each year to protect public lands from the environmental impacts of herd overpopulation – such as soil erosion, sedimentation of streams, and damage to wildlife habitat.

In the case of the Maritta Burro Range, excess animals exist outside the HMA and the gather is needed not only to ensure balance on the range and reversal of downward trends.

Although the BLM tries to place as many removed animals as possible into private care through adoption or sales, the public's demand for adoptable wild horses has declined sharply over the last 10 plus years, leaving the federal agency in the unsustainable position of gathering excess horses while its holding costs spiral upward.

***Q. Where do the removed animals go?***

**A.** All burros identified for removal will be transported to the Axtell Off-Range Corrals, located in Axtell, Utah. All horses identified for removal will be transported to the Palomino Valley Off-Range Corrals, located in Reno, NV. Upon arrival to the facility, all animals will be checked by a veterinarian and readied for the BLM's wild horse and burro adoption program.

***Q. What veterinary treatment will the removed animals receive?***

**A.** Once the animals arrive at the Off-Range Corrals, the crew will allow them to acclimate to domestic feed and monitor them for a period of time. Following, the animals will be aged (based on the condition of their teeth), de-wormed, vaccinated, blood-tested (for Equine Infectious Anemia), freeze-marked (marked with a cold brand) and stallions will be gelded.

***Q. What happens to animals that are not adopted?***

**A.** Un-adopted animals are fed and cared for in either short-term corrals or long-term Midwestern pastures. Animals usually over 10 years old and those passed over for adoption at least three times become eligible for sale, a transaction in which the title of ownership to the animals passes immediately from the Federal government to the buyer. (In the adoption process, the title of ownership passes from the Federal government to the adopter after the individual provides one year of humane care.)

***Q. Will any of the animals be sent to slaughter?***

**A.** No. While a December 2004 law granting the BLM sale authority authorizes the agency to sell sale-eligible animals “without limitation,” the Bureau has **not been and is not selling any wild horses and burros to slaughterhouses or to “killer buyers.” All animals in holding retain their status as “wild” animals and remain under the BLM’s protection.**

***Q. Is there any livestock grazing in this area?***

**A.** Livestock use complies with the grazing system outlined in the final multiple use decisions, agreements and term permit conditions that provide for periodic rest and deferment of key range sites.

The Marietta gather project area overlaps the Garfield Flat, Little Huntoon, Belleville, Basalt and McBride Flat grazing allotments. The Belleville, Little Huntoon, McBride Flat, and Basalt grazing allotments do not have active grazing permits. Belleville and Little Huntoon have not been grazed since 2013. McBride Flat has not been managed for grazing since 1988.

The HMA boundary of the Marrietta herd encompasses the old Marrietta grazing allotment, which was removed from livestock grazing in 1987 to designate the Marrietta Burro range, it also encompasses a portion of the Belleville allotment which is not an active permit and has not been grazed since 2013.

***Q. Is the BLM removing burros to make room for more cattle grazing?***

**A.** No. The BLM carries out removal of wild burros from public rangelands to ensure rangeland health and in accordance with land-use plans that were developed in an open, public process. These land-use plans are the means by which the BLM carries out its core mission, which is to manage the land for multiple uses while protecting the land’s resources. Authorized livestock grazing on BLM-administered lands has declined by nearly 50-percent since the 1940s; actual (as distinguished from authorized) livestock grazing on public rangelands has declined by 30-percent since 1971.

Wild burros often graze the same area repeatedly throughout the year. Forage plants in those areas receive little rest from grazing pressure. Continuous grazing by wild burros does not allow plants sufficient time to recover from grazing impacts. Such overgrazing results in reduced plant health, vigor, reproduction, and ultimately to a loss of native forage species from natural plant communities. Over time, this greatly diminishes habitat quality as abundance and long-term production of desired plant communities is compromised. If wild burro populations are not controlled in this area, forage utilization will exceed the capacity of the range.

***Q. What are some of the effects of wild horse overpopulation on Threatened and Endangered Species?***

**A.** Maintaining the existing wild burro over-population, which would increase with each successive foal crop, would result in continued and increasing impacts to threatened and endangered species populations and habitats. Wild burro populations would increase about 15-25% each year that a gather is postponed.

***Q. Where may I learn more about the Wild Horse and Burro Program?***

**A.** Please visit the BLM's website at <https://www.blm.gov/whb>