



News Release

BLM Headquarters Office

Media Contact: blm_press@blm.gov

January 5, 2022

BLM releases annual plan for wild horse and burro gathers and fertility control operations

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Bureau of Land Management plans to increase wild horse and burro gather and fertility control operations in Fiscal Year 2022 to reduce the risk of starvation, thirst, and habitat destruction as climate change and extreme drought continues to impact the West. The plan follows a year marked by extreme drought and [a record number of emergency actions to save wild horses and burros](#) and protect critical habitat on public lands.

Drought significantly magnifies the impact overpopulation can have on both the health of wild horses and burros and the land on which they depend, and this is occurring as overall population levels increase. As of March 1, 2021, the wild horse and burro population on BLM public lands was estimated at more than 86,000 animals – which is more than three times the appropriate management level, though slightly less than the 95,000 animals that were estimated in 2020. When appropriate management levels are exceeded, wild horses and burros can damage the habitat shared by a variety of animals on public lands, and it increases the risk of starvation and thirst for wild horses and burros themselves. If not managed, herds typically grow 20 percent annually, doubling in size every four years.

In total, the BLM plans to gather at least 22,000 wild horses and burros from overpopulated herds, remove at least 19,000 excess animals, and treat at least 2,300 animals with various forms of fertility control and release them back on to public lands through the end of September 2022. If achieved, this would be the largest number of animals ever treated with fertility control in one year – nearly double the previous record of 1,160 treatments set in 2021 – as well as the largest number of animals ever gathered and removed in one year.

“The BLM is committed to the safety of the wild horses and burros entrusted to our care,” **said BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning.** “Our gather efforts, handling standards, and fertility control work are guided by our compassion for these animals and our desire to protect their well-being, as well as the health of our public lands.”

The BLM continues to implement a multi-year plan to achieve and maintain the appropriate management level of wild horses and burros on public lands using a variety of management tools, including gathers to reduce overpopulation, fertility control to slow future growth, and

adoptions to place excess animals into good homes. The agency made significant progress last year towards its goals, including placing more than 8,600 animals into private care through [adoptions and sales](#) – the largest number in 24 years. Reforms to strengthen protections for animals placed into private care are planned in the coming months.

Find the full gather and fertility control treatment schedule: [BLM.gov/whb/gathers](https://blm.gov/whb/gathers)

-BLM-

This year, we invite everyone to reimagine your public lands as we celebrate 75 years of the BLM's stewardship and service to the American people. The BLM manages approximately 245 million acres of public land located primarily in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The agency's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.