

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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Contact: Cindy Wertz
307-775-6014

BLM Concludes Winter Wild Horse Gather

The Bureau of Land Management gathered around 920 wild horses in southwest Wyoming before operations were shut down due to weather.

Several key factors lead the BLM's decision to suspend the gathers. "First and foremost, we do not want to endanger the wild horses or anyone involved in the gather operations," said Alan Shepherd, BLM Wyoming's Wild Horse and Burro program lead.

"Our goal all along was to remove the identified excess wild horses from the Salt Wells Creek and Adobe Town Herd Management Areas (HMAs) as safely and humanely as possible. We were able to gather 918 wild horses since we began this operation in early January. Severe cold, heavy snow cover and limited access due to drifting snow have had an impact on our efforts to bring the wild horse population in line with established Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs)," Shepherd added.

The BLM has an established AML for each of the HMAs it administers. The removal of 846 horses has allowed the BLM to make significant progress towards attaining the AML range identified for the Salt Wells Creek HMA. As part of this gather operation, 41 mares on the western portion of the HMA were treated with fertility control vaccine and released back into the HMA. No horses were removed from within the Adobe Town HMA due to snow cover.

As a general rule, horses are herded no more than 5-10 miles to temporary gather and holding pens. Factors such as terrain, weather, snow and cold as well as horse concentrations and condition reduce these distances. "We, the BLM and the gather contractor, make every effort to reduce the amount of stress the animals go through during a gather operation. When you look at all the variables you can see why we opted to stop our gather operations," explained Shepherd.

The BLM works closely with the State of Wyoming, Department of Agriculture. John Etchepare, Dept. of Ag said, "We will be working closely with BLM to schedule dates to complete the Adobe Town and Salt Wells gathers. The earliest this could happen is late July. I wish to thank all of the BLM personnel who worked extremely hard under adverse conditions to gather the number of horses they did before the weather forced them to stop."

The Wyoming Game & Fish Department, the Wyoming Governor's Office, the Rawlins and Rock Springs BLM Field Office and the BLM Wyoming's Rock Springs Wild Horse Corrals also were involved in the coordination and support of the gathers.

Many of the wild horses gathered in January are currently in the Rock Springs facility waiting to be made available for adoption or to be sent to BLM contracted long-term holding facilities to live out the balance of their lives. Some of the gathered wild horses were shipped to the BLM holding facility in Canon City, Colo. To learn more on how to adopt a wild horse, visit the BLM Wild Horse and Burro

Program website at <http://www.wy.blm.gov/rsfo/wildhorses.htm>

The BLM is planning to conduct a post-gather wild horse population survey in the Adobe Town and Salt Wells Creek HMAs this spring to gather additional wild horse population and distribution data for these two HMAs.

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