

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson St.
Craig, CO 81625

DECISION RECORD

Sand Wash Basin Wild Horse Herd Management Area Gather

DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2021-0034-EA

Decision

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action, as described in DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2021-0034-EA, authorizing the gather and removal of wild horses from the Sand Wash Basin Herd Management Area over a ten-year period, to reduce population numbers to within the Appropriate Management Level (AML) range of 163 to 362 wild horses. This decision also authorizes application of a variety of fertility control treatments and methods. These actions are described in detail below.

Gather and Removal of Excess Wild Horses

The BLM has determined, based on review of wild horse population surveys, distribution, and ecological condition data, that an excess population of wild horses exists within the Sand Wash Basin HMA and proposes to gather and remove excess wild horses to the low AML. Removing excess wild horses from these HMAs is consistent with Section 3 of the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (WFRHBA), 16 U.S.C. § 1333.

Current wild horse population levels are at least four times higher than the low end of AML and far exceeds the capacity of the HMA to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance (TNEB). Because the current population far exceeds the AML range and the HMA's ability to maintain TNEB, the WFRHBA mandates that BLM remove these excess horses. Currently, the herd is at risk of widespread suffering and death from lack of water and/or food resources, especially during times of drought. In recent years, the BLM has authorized volunteers to haul water to stock tanks within the HMA during times of exceptional drought to support the excess population. The rangeland within the HMA is degraded, showing a loss of grasses and forbs in much of the area.

The BLM will gather and selectively remove excess wild horses down to the low end of AML using a single or multiple gather operation(s) conducted as soon as possible and return periodically to gather excess wild horses to maintain the AML within the HMA. The BLM will continue to remove excess wild horses (to the low end of AML) by conducting subsequent

(follow-up) gather and removals as necessary over a ten-year period. The ten-year period of potential gathers will begin with the initial gather operation within the HMA.

Gather operations and fertility control treatments may be delayed and/or halted and then restarted depending on funding and the allocation of spaces in holding facilities.

Fertility Control Treatments

To the extent possible, the BLM will continue the administration of fertility control treatments prior to the initial gather operation to continue reducing the current annual recruitment rate and will continue with fertility control treatments over the period of ten years from the date of the initial gather operation. If no new information changes this analysis and funding continues to be provided, BLM will continue fertility control treatments beyond the ten years. Under this alternative, fertility control treatments will primarily consist of vaccine treatments (e.g., PZP ZonaStat-H vaccine, PZP-22 pelleted vaccine treatment, GonaCon-Equine vaccine) along with the potential use of flexible intrauterine devices (IUDs) for open mares. Fertility control treatments will be applied through hand applications, jab sticks, in the field darting, or other appropriate application method for the effective application of the selected fertility control type (see EA Appendix E and G).

If it is determined that a mare or mares cannot be approached within darting range on foot, then baiting may be used to draw the wild horses to within darting distance for treatment. Baiting will be accomplished with water, salt, mineral supplements, grains, or weed-free hay in areas that wild horses use in their normal movements throughout the HMA. Wild horses may need to be trapped at bait stations, enabling them to be darted and then released. Darting may also occur at locations where wild horses normally travel or at concentration areas around water. Darting may take place day or night depending on effective timeframes to apply to wild horses. If the mechanism is shown to be safe and effective, BLM may consider use of an automated dart delivery system (e.g., as developed by Wildlife Protection Management, New Mexico). The BLM will follow Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) for implementation of fertility control treatments (See EA Appendices E and F).

Population Monitoring

Population inventories, genetic sampling and analysis, and routine resource/habitat monitoring will continue to be conducted between gather cycles to document current population levels, growth rates, and areas of continued resource concern (wild horse concentrations, riparian impacts, over-utilization, etc.). Potential reductions in recruitment rates due to the use of fertility control treatments will be accounted for in future population projections, based on the estimated fraction of mares expected to be contracepted in a given year.

Selective Removal and Augmentation

In order to manage for the long-term genetic and phenotypic diversity of the HMA wild horse population, the BLM may choose to implement selective removal of individual horses or to release new animals into the herd. Selective removal procedures will prioritize removal of

younger horses to allow older, less adoptable wild horses to be released back to the HMA. The selection process will involve retaining wild horses for a diversity of preferred conformation, disposition, color, and other features deemed desirable in the herd. Periodic introduction of studs or mares from a different HMA, with desired characteristics similar to the wild horses within the HMA could be made, to augment genetic diversity in the HMA, as measured by observed heterozygosity, if the results of genetic monitoring indicate that is prudent. All wild horses identified to remain in the HMA herd will be selected to maintain a diverse age structure, color, and body type (conformation).

Design Features

Gather Methods

The types of approved gather methods include:

1. Helicopter drive-trapping involves using a helicopter to spot and then herd wild horses towards a pre-constructed trap. Traps will be pre-constructed utilizing portable, round-pipe steel panels with funnel-shaped wings made up of jute fabric affixed to T-posts that have been temporarily tamped into the ground to create a visual barrier. As the wild horses are driven/hazed by the helicopter towards the trap through the “wings” or funnel, the wild horses enter the trap where on-the-ground personnel then shut the gate behind the wild horses to secure them in the trap. In general, most traps will be 1 – 5 acres in size. Trap locations will be situated in areas where previously used trap sites were located or at other disturbed areas whenever possible. Trap locations will be chosen for safety of maneuvering the wild horses into the trap, as well as to target the gathering of wild horses located in a given area. The BLM WH&B Handbook, H-4700-1, Section 4.4.4 and WO-IM 2010-183 prohibits the capture of wild horses by helicopter during peak foaling periods except in case of emergency. Helicopter drive-trapping will not be conducted between the dates of March 1 and June 30, which is the peak foaling period in the HMA (WO-IM 2010-183), except in emergency situations according to IM 2015-152. The use of helicopters for gather operations is allowed from July 1 to February 28 which is outside of the peak foaling period.
2. Helicopter-assisted roping includes the use of a helicopter to herd wild horses towards ropers who rope the wild horse(s). Once roped, another rider will ride alongside the roped wild horse and roper, helping to haze or herd the roped wild horse either towards the trap or towards a stock trailer. Once at the trap, the rope is slipped off the wild horse’s neck and it joins the rest of the trapped wild horses. No helicopter-assisted roping will be conducted between the dates of March 1 and June 30 due to the BLM’s policy which prohibits the capture of wild horses by helicopter during peak foaling periods.
3. Bait trapping uses a trap constructed of portable, round-pipe steel panels. Funnel-shaped traps are built allowing wild horses to enter deep into the trap so that the gate release mechanism has time to close. Traps will be located in areas frequented by wild horses.

Potential types of bait may include, but are not limited to, water, mineral supplements, or quality, weed free hay, and may also include the utilization of domestic mares/studs to attract wild horses into the trap. Bait trapping may be conducted at any time of year. Trap size will generally be less than ¼-acre in area. Traps will remain in place until the desired number of excess wild horses are gathered and removed. Bait trapping generally requires a longer window of time for success than helicopter drive trapping. Although the trap(s) will be set in a high probability area for capturing the excess wild horses residing within a given area, and at the most effective time periods, some period of time is required for the wild horses to acclimate to the trap and/or decide to access the bait. Due to the necessity of wild horse having free uninterrupted access to trap locations, public access may be limited to trap locations on public lands.

When actively bait trapping wild horses, the trap will be staffed or checked daily by either BLM personnel or authorized contractor staff and possibly authorized volunteers. Wild horses will be either removed immediately or fed and watered for up to several days prior to transport to a holding facility.

Design Features for Gather Operations

Animal Welfare:

1. During gathering operations, safety precautions will be taken to protect all personnel, animals, and property involved in the process from injury or damage, consistent with BLM's CAWP (Appendix B and BLM PIM-2021-002). Only authorized personnel will be allowed on site during the removal operations. Included in the "gathering and removal" operations will be sorting individual wild horses as to their age, sex, temperament and/or physical condition, and to return selected wild horses back to the HMA.
2. Contractors and/or BLM personnel will utilize trailers to transport gathered wild horses to a temporary holding facility where they will receive appropriate food and water. Holding facilities and gather sites have historically been located on both public and private lands due to road access and availability of water.
3. Wild horses that are removed from the area will most likely be transported to BLM's Canon City, Colorado holding facility where they will be prepared (freeze-marked, vaccinated, microchipped, and de-wormed) for adoption, sale (as regulations permit), or off-range pastures unless unforeseen circumstances warranted that the wild horses be transported to a different approved BLM holding facility (i.e., at Rock Springs, Wyoming).
4. A veterinarian from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will be present at helicopter gather operations to examine animals and make recommendations to the BLM for care and treatment of the gathered wild horses. Decisions to humanely euthanize animals in field situations will be made in

conformance with BLM Manual 4730 and IM 2015-070. If for some reason an APHIS Veterinarian is not present on a gather, the BLM will coordinate with a local private veterinarian for on-call or referral services as needed. BLM staff will be present on the gather at all times to observe animal condition, ensure humane treatment of wild horses, and ensure contract requirements are met.

5. During gather operations, the Contracting Officer Representative (COR), as delegated by the AO prior to the gather, will authorize the release or euthanasia of any wild horse that they believe will not tolerate the handling stress associated with transportation, adoption preparation, or holding. No wild horse should be released or shipped to a preparation or other facility with a preexisting condition that requires immediate euthanasia as an act of mercy. The Incident Commander (IC) or COR should, as an act of mercy and after consultation with the on-site veterinarian, euthanize any animal that meets any of the conditions described in IM 2015-070.

Communication:

1. The LSFO will utilize the Incident Command System (ICS) to enable safe, efficient, and successful wild horse gather and removal operations in accordance with IM 2013-060.
2. The BLM will provide the public/media with safe and transparent visitation at helicopter wild horse gather operations in accordance with IM 2013-058. Due to the nature of bait trapping operations, public/media observation may be limited. The BLM will conduct gather operations while ensuring the humane treatment of wild horses in accordance with PIM-2021-002. A schedule will be prepared and posted on the appropriate website that will outline specific viewing opportunities and other relevant information. The BLM will provide concise, accurate and timely information about gather operations with communication and reporting during an ongoing wild horse gather in accordance with IM 2013-061 regarding Internal and External Communication and Reporting.
3. Any discovery of hazardous or potentially hazardous materials will be reported to the BLM hazardous materials coordinator and Law Enforcement for investigation.
4. Prior to commencement of gathering operations, the BLM will notify existing right-of-way holders, range permittees, operators, and lessees of any location, date, and time associated with the gather operation that may affect their permitted activities.
5. If gather operations are conducted during any of the CPW big game seasons, Special Recreation Permit holders authorized to operate in the analysis area for commercial big game guiding and outfitting will be notified of the gather activities and locations in advance.
6. The BLM is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts.

7. If any archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, activity in the vicinity of the discovery will cease, and the LSFO Archaeologist will be notified immediately. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The BLM will make every effort to protect the site from further impacts including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage until BLM determines a treatment approach, and the treatment is completed. Unless previously determined in treatment plans or agreements, the BLM will evaluate the cultural resources and, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), select the appropriate mitigation option within 48 hours of the discovery. The BLM will implement the mitigation in a timely manner. The process will be fully documented in reports, site forms, maps, drawings, and photographs. The BLM will forward documentation to the SHPO for review and concurrence.
8. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the BLM will immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the AO.
9. The BLM will be responsible for informing all persons who are associated with gather operations that they will be subject to prosecution for disturbing or collecting vertebrate or other scientifically important fossils, collecting large amounts of petrified wood (over 25lbs./day, up to 250lbs./year), or collecting fossils for commercial purposes on public lands.

Weed Management and Reclamation:

1. Any hay fed at trap sites or holding facilities, on public lands, will be certified as weed free. Any noxious weeds introduced through the proposed action will be controlled by the BLM. If weeds are discovered, the BLM will treat these locations following procedures outlined in the LSFO's Integrated Weed Management Plan.
2. All trap locations will be monitored for up to three years after gather operations for vegetation recovery. If problems with vegetation establishment are discovered, BLM will treat these locations based on the aid in vegetation recovery that may be necessary, e.g., broadcast seeding, at the trap locations.
3. All equipment used for gathering operations shall be cleaned before it comes to LSFO and when it leaves LSFO to minimize the potential spread of noxious and/or invasive weed species.
4. Equipment shall be cleaned when moving between locations within the analysis area if noxious weeds are encountered and if there is any potential for weed seeds to be carried between locations.

Restrictions on Trap Locations:

1. The BLM will not construct new bait trap locations or have new temporary holding facilities within 100 meters of known occupied habitat for special status plant species (SSPS). Trap and holding facilities that are proposed to occur on existing disturbance within 100 meters of SSPS habitat must be approved by the LSFO Rangeland Management Specialist (RMS) prior to gather operations. The LSFO RMS will advise and determine if a habitat assessment or survey is necessary before trap location approval. Prior to helicopter gather operations, a SSPS avoidance area map will be provided to incident command staff and the BLM's COR by the LSFO RMS for reference during selection of helicopter drive trap site locations.
2. If a trap location or holding facility (located on existing disturbances) must occur within 100 meters of occupied habitat for SSPS during the growing season dust abatement will occur to limit impacts to plant photosynthesis from fugitive dust.
3. Traps and temporary holding facilities will be located in previously used trap sites or on an area of existing disturbance, such as a road or a wash. If an existing disturbed area cannot be located for traps and temporary holding facilities, a cultural resource inventory will take place prior to the gather if there is inadequate inventory data available. If cultural resources are located during this inventory, the trap site or temporary holding facility will be moved to another location, which does not contain cultural resources.
4. Known and reported fossil localities will be avoided when locating trap sites and associated wing fences and holding facilities. Sites without adequate inventory data will need to be examined for the presence of fossils during trap site selection activities. Trap facilities will be relocated or modified to avoid impacting identified fossil resources.
5. Surveys of suitable raptor nesting habitat will be conducted by a LSFO Biologist at trap sites proposed for use or development from April 15 to August 15. In the event an active raptor nest is found in the vicinity of trapping operations, these sites will be afforded a buffer adequate to effectively isolate nesting activity from disruptions generated by wild horse trapping operations. The timing stipulation will only apply to trapping operations. Darting operations will be permitted during this time frame.
6. Trapping operations will only be allowed to take place between the hours of 9:00 am and 4:00 pm at trap sites located within 0.25 miles of active sage-grouse leks during the lekking period (March 1 – May 15).
7. Those sites proposed for water trapping will be surveyed by a LSFO Biologist prior to use to determine if sites are occupied by aquatic amphibian species. If trapping efforts are found to impact individuals or habitat, the trap site will be relocated.

Minimizing Erosion:

1. All activity shall cease when soils or road surfaces become saturated to a depth of three inches unless otherwise approved by the AO.
2. Any trap sites located on slopes greater than 35 percent will be evaluated in the field by a LSFO Hydrologist prior to identifying any necessary mitigation in order to ensure that use of the site will still allow for meeting Public Land Health Standard 1 (e.g., minimizing overland surface erosion and subsequent rill and/or gully formation). Examples of mitigation may include placement of waddles.

Helicopter Operations:

1. Avoid, if possible, helicopter gather operations from late-August through November for high public use areas during big game hunting seasons.
2. If possible, the BLM will avoid helicopter gather operations from December 1 through February 28 to reduce/eliminate impacts to big game during the critical winter period.
3. CPW staff will be contacted to coordinate gather operations in an effort to develop mutually compatible strategies that may reduce the intensity and localize the expanse of helicopter related disturbances during big game hunting seasons.
4. The Contractor must operate in compliance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Regulations, Part 91. Pilots provided by the Contractor shall comply with the Contractor's Federal Aviation Certificates and applicable regulations of the State in which the gather is located.
5. Aviation fueling operations will be conducted a minimum of 1,000 ft from wild horses in traps or temporary holding facilities.
6. All refueling will occur on existing roads or a site approved by the BLM as a helicopter staging area. All approved staging areas will be a minimum of 200 ft from any riparian area or stream channel. The operator will utilize absorbent pads while refueling to control potential of fuel spills. In the event of a spill of lubricant, hydraulic fluids, fuels, or other hydrocarbons, the spill will be reported to the BLM's COR or Project Inspector (PI) so that BLM can immediately conduct evaluations of any necessary clean-up actions, as well as perform such actions to ensure compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.
7. When utilizing a helicopter gather all helicopter operations will be conducted in a safe manner and in compliance with FAA regulations 14 CFR § 91.119, IM 2010-164 and IM 2013-164.

Design Features for Fertility Treatments

General

1. Fertility control treatment will be conducted in accordance with standard operating procedures (Appendix F) and post-treatment monitoring procedures. Breeding age mares selected for release back to the range will be treated with approved fertility control vaccines and/or IUDs, which will reduce fertility of the treated mares.
2. Any new fertility controls may be considered for use as directed through the most recent direction of the National Wild Horse and Burro Program. The use of any new fertility controls will employ the most current best management practices and humane procedures available for the implementation of the new controls.
3. Fertility control vaccines may be administered through darting by trained BLM personnel or collaborating partners only. For any vaccine darting operation, the designated personnel must have successfully completed a darting training course and who possess documented and successful experience darting under field conditions. If the mechanism is shown to be safe and effective, BLM may consider use of an automated dart delivery system (e.g., as developed by Wildlife Protection Management, New Mexico), pursuant to the development of additional SOPs.
4. The LSFO will be applying adaptive management principles as it pertains to fertility control applications and treatments, in the sense that management decisions could be informed by new information that comes from the results of monitoring and new scientific information. If policies change or the vaccine effects or effectiveness prove undesirable, then the application of the fertility control measures will be stopped or reconsidered based on new scientific information. If a specific adjuvant is dropped from BLM use and is replaced by another vaccine formulation for fertility control purposes, that method will be applied in future treatments.
5. Fertility control will be administered prior to and once AML is reached, and throughout the life of the plan. If monitoring shows successful applications, a low rate of debilitating injection site reactions and reduction in foaling rates, the fertility control treatments could continue beyond the life of the plan as long as it can be reasonably concluded that no new information and no new circumstances arise that need to be considered and those that are analyzed within this document have not substantially changed within the HMA. The number of fertility control applications per year will also depend on annual funding and the presence of qualified applicators.
6. The field darting treatment protocol continue prior to the initial gather. Field darting will be conducted in an opportunistic manner while the specialist is conducting routine monitoring activities as part of normal duties in the field or in an intentional manner depending on personnel availability and timing. Field darting may also be conducted by trained and authorized volunteers. Field darting activities will be conducted either on foot or horseback, with access throughout the HMA achieved by use of 4X4 vehicles and

other off-highway vehicles (OHVs). Vehicles will be used on existing/designated roads and trails in the HMA. After review of all potential access options and on a case-by-case basis, the use of OHVs off existing roads and trails may be allowed for administrative purposes; however, such use will be made only with the approvals from both the LSFO personnel and the AO.

7. Darting may be conducted individually or in teams. In most cases, it is generally recommended that no more than two people will be present on a darting “team.” The second person is responsible for locating fired darts and will also be responsible for identifying the wild horse to be treated, keeping onlookers at a safe distance, and general support/safety of the team while in the field. However, darting “teams” of one or a higher number than two will also be acceptable where appropriate.
8. Attempts will be made to recover all darts. To the extent possible, all darts which are discharged and drop from the wild horse at the darting site will be recovered before another darting occurs. In exceptional situations, the site of a lost dart may be noted and marked, and recovery efforts made at a later time. All discharged darts will be examined after recovery in order to determine if the charge fired and the plunger fully expelled the vaccine. Personnel conducting darting operations should be equipped with a two-way radio or cell phone to provide a communication link with the identified BLM personnel for advice and/or assistance. In the event of a veterinary emergency, darting personnel will immediately contact the Project Veterinarian, providing all available information concerning the nature and location of the incident.
9. Treatment with IUDs will follow established protocols (Appendix E and F).

Wild Horse Identification and Priority for Treatment

1. Each mare will have an identification sheet with pictures, describing any markings, brands, scars, or other distinguishing marks. Captured animals will receive an RFID chip. At the beginning of each year, a list of mares identified for treatment will be created and that information will be loaded into a format that is easy to use in the field (e.g., field notebook or electronic device). Currently, LSFO has a volunteer group with over seven years of wild horse identification data that they will provide to the LSFO if requested by the BLM. IUD treated mares will be marked in a manner similar to those treated with vaccines.
2. New mares coming into treatment will be given the booster dose no sooner than 30 days after they have received the primer dose. Estimated age will be based on when the wild horses are observed being new herd foals. For older previously treated wild horses, estimated age will come from the treatment’s identification sheets. Aging older untreated wild horses will be based off photographs or similar documentation provided by volunteers knowledgeable of the herd/bands. For any adult mare whose age cannot be immediately established, initial treatment will be delayed by one year, to ensure she is older than eight months by the time of the first treatment.

3. Flexibility in determining which mares are selected for treatment is vital to the success of the fertility control program. Adjustments could be made: if it is found that there is a severe injection site reaction by an individual mare; if a given mare is determined by the LFSO to contribute in a particularly useful way to genetic diversity; or if a mare is determined by the LFSO to have a potentially negative effect on the herd's genetic diversity. This information will be documented on the identification sheet.
4. If timing or funding constraints arise, a treatment priority could consider the band or herd composition and priority will be given based on age class. Priorities will be established as follows:
 - a. two to four-year-old mares,
 - b. mares just coming back into treatment, fillies eight months old or older, and
 - c. older mares that have received several treatments since producing a live foal.
5. The treated mares will be individually marked, have a microchip inserted for identification and/or be individually recognizable. During past treatments, mares may have been freeze branded on the hip and the neck. These methods will help in the identification of the wild horses. During any future gathers, RFID chips will be placed in the nuchal ligament of all captured animals, and new brands may be put on mares released back to the HMA. Color, leg and face markings, and any other unique markings or scars could be used to identify any mares without a brand. Once each wild horse is positively identified, their information will be compiled into a database along with photographs. Individual identification information (photographs and unique characteristics) will be compiled into books or put onto an electronic device that can be taken to the field. Individual numbers are assigned to each herd/band member based on these unique characteristics. Unique numbers will be assigned to all mares and documented on the Identification sheets. A filly under eight months will be tracked on her mother's Identification sheet. A filly over eight months of age will receive her own number and Identification sheet. Where information is reliable, maternal kinship will be tracked or followed through Identification sheet notes.

Record Keeping

1. Wild Horse Immunocontraception Identification Sheets (currently in Wild Horse Information Management System [WHIMS]) will be prepared and updated. An individual mare's records will be reviewed prior to darting activity.
2. All darting, foaling, and health data will be recorded as per the Identification Sheet. Identification Sheets will be prepared and maintained in the LSFO or approved maintainer of information/volunteer (e.g., Sand Wash Advocate Team, a.k.a. SWAT), or specific volunteer with WHIMS data entry experience). Initially, copies of the

Identification Sheets will be sent to the National WH&B Program Office and to the Science Conservation Center (SCC) at the Zoo Montana in Billings, MT. Thereafter, only treatment updates or new mare Identification Sheets will be sent annually.

3. The annual treatment schedule, database and Identification Sheets will be reviewed/approved by the AO with the wild horse specialist and/or darting specialist. An annual monitoring report will be prepared for the AO and filed in the fertility control treatment records for the HMA. This monitoring report may show fertility control treatment orders placed/costs, planned treatment schedule/actual treatments (number/dates of mares treated), lost darts, negative reactions/BLM action taken for that mare, number of new/current year foals counted/observed, unique circumstances, off road vehicular use, general rangeland condition/water availability, volunteer efforts, correspondence between/among the LSFO and the SCC and National WH&B Office and other pertinent information.

Regulatory Authorization and Vaccine Administration

1. Only volunteers, treatment contractors, or BLM personnel appropriately trained with fertility control will be authorized to apply the vaccine. Field darters may be accompanied by others to assist in the darting work.
2. The liquid gonadotropin releasing hormone (GnRH) vaccine, known as GonaCon-Equine, is federally approved by the EPA registration number 56228-41. No specific training is required to administer GonaCon-Equine to wild horses; however, a certified pesticide handler is required to receive shipments of the drug, and the EPA label requirements must be followed.
3. The LSFO will work with the WH&B Office in Reno, Nevada, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the production company known as SpayFirst!, Inc. to order GonaCon-Equine vaccine. The distributor will then prepare and ship the order to the field office. Each dose of GonaCon-Equine will consist of 2 ml of emulsified liquid, including 0.032 percent of mammalian GnRH. No mixing of the vaccine is required. Remote application will be by means of darts, equipped with 3.81 cm 14 gage Tri-Port needles and a gel collar (McCann et al. 2017), delivered by either Dan-inject or Pneu-dart CO2 powered, or cartridge fired devices (guns). Recovery of all darts will be attempted (normally about a 98 percent recovery is expected).
4. The liquid PZP vaccine, known as ZonaStat-H is federally approved by the EPA registration number 86833-1. Training is required by the SCC to receive and/or administer ZonaStat-H to wild horses.
5. The LSFO will work with SCC to order the PZP vaccine. The SCC then prepares and ships the order to the field office. Each dose will consist of 100 micrograms of PZP in 0.5 cc buffer (a phosphate buffered saline solution). Mixing the vaccine will be accomplished

as described in the Wild Horse Contraceptive Training Manual. Remote application will be by means of 1.0-cc darts, with either 1.25- or 1.5-inch barbless needles, delivered by either Dan-inject or Pneu-dart CO₂ powered, or cartridge-fired devices (guns).

6. PZP-22 pellet vaccine treatments may be administered. At present, PZP-22 treatment is only given by BLM to captured mares, via hand injections.
7. PZP vaccine mixing procedures will be followed. The PZP vaccine protocol will be examined annually, in line with any new instructions provided by the SCC. The field use of GonaCon-Equine vaccine does not require mixing of the adjuvant.

Standard Statewide archaeological and paleontological stipulations.

1. The BLM project lead is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts.
2. If any archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, activity in the vicinity of the discovery will cease, and the BLM LSFO Archaeologist will be notified immediately. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The applicant will make every effort to protect the site from further impacts including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage until BLM determines a treatment approach, and the treatment is completed. Unless previously determined in treatment plans or agreements, BLM will evaluate the cultural resources and, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), select the appropriate mitigation option within 48 hours of the discovery. The applicant, under guidance of the BLM, will implement the mitigation in a timely manner. The process will be fully documented in reports, site forms, maps, drawings, and photographs. The BLM will forward documentation to the SHPO for review and concurrence.
3. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the applicant must notify the AO, by telephone and written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), the operator must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the AO.
4. The applicant is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for disturbing or collecting vertebrate or other scientifically-important fossils, collecting large amounts of petrified wood (over 25lbs./day, up to 250lbs./year), or collecting fossils for commercial purposes on public lands. If any paleontological resources are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the applicant must immediately contact the appropriate BLM representative.

Compliance with Laws & Conformance with the Land Use Plan

This decision is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. It is also in conformance with the 2011 Little Snake Record of Decision/Approved Resource Management Plan.

Environmental Analysis and Finding of No Significant Impact

The Proposed Action was analyzed in DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2021-0034-EA and it was found to have no significant impacts, therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Public Involvement

This project was posted on the LSFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 4/2/2021, and a public comment period was held from April 2, 2021 through May 16, 2021, and 1,189 comments were received. See BLM response to comments in EA Appendix K.

Monitoring and Compliance

On-going compliance inspections and monitoring will be conducted by Little Snake Field Office staff before, during and after gathers, and annually within the HMA. Specific design features will be followed.

Rationale

The Wild and Free-roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1976 and subsequent BLM policy and guidance demands that BLM lands within wild horse Herd Management Areas and wild horse populations be managed to achieve a thriving natural ecological balance. The Sand Wash Basin wild horse herd is currently at least four times greater than the low end of the appropriate management level (number of wild horses) that can be sustained on the landscape. Gather and removal of wild horses is necessary to maintain satisfactory vegetative cover and water availability that is needed to support healthy wild horses, other wildlife, livestock, and other uses of the land.

Administrative Remedies

This decision shall take effect immediately upon the date it is signed by the Authorized Officer and shall remain in effect while any appeal is pending unless the Interior Board of Land Appeals issues a stay (43 CFR 2801.10(b)). Any appeal of this decision must follow the procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 4. Within 30 days of the decision, a Notice of Appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at Little Snake Field Office, 455 Emerson St., Craig, CO 81625 with copies sent to the Regional Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region, 755 Parfet St., Suite 151, Lakewood, CO 80215, and to the Department of the Interior, Board of Land Appeals, 801 North Quincy St., MS300-QC, Arlington, VA, 22203. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals at the above address within 30 days after the Notice of Appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

Signature of Authorized Official

BRUCE SILLITOE Digitally signed by BRUCE SILLITOE
Date: 2021.08.17 12:18:57 -06'00'

Field Manager

Date