



Ely

Buck & Bald

5/26/83

RICHARD H. BRYAN
GOVERNOR

WILLIAM A. MOLINI
DIRECTOR

1100 VALLEY ROAD

P.O. BOX 10678

RENO, NEVADA 89520-0022

TELEPHONE (702) 784-6214

May 26, 1983

Mr. Merrill DeSpain
District Manager
Ely District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Star Route 5, Box 1
Ely, NV 89301

Dear Merrill:

This letter is a follow up to our discussion at the recent State Directors' meeting and is intended to clarify our position on the problems associated with wild horse use in the vicinity of Buck and Bald Mountain. As you are probably aware by now, our agency identified this area in a letter dated May 19, 1983 as the the number one priority in the state for horse number reductions. We have supported the Ely District recommendation for horse removal in this area for the primary purpose of obtaining range condition improvement in a key deer wintering area.

Range monitoring studies show that up to 80 percent of the bitterbrush growth has been consumed by domestic livestock and/or wild horses prior to the time migratory deer arrive at the site. We do not believe that utilization rates of that magnitude are in the best interest of multiple use management nor do we believe, based on the data, that mule deer are a major contributor to the forage utilization problem.

Based upon dietary studies in the western United States, it is suspected that domestic livestock have the greatest impact on bitterbrush overutilization, whereas excessive numbers of wild horses and livestock have led to general range deterioration in the area. Even though livestock may have a greater impact than wild horses on this key forage species, we believe that horse reductions will provide overall range relief which in turn will allow better livestock distribution and ultimately less concentration on bitterbrush plants. In other words, we are assuming that when grass species become more readily available, livestock will utilize the preferred grass rather than bitterbrush.

Mr. Merrill DeSpain
May 26, 1983
Page 2

By supporting wild horse reductions in this area, our agency is assuming, in good faith, that the BLM is not intending to increase livestock numbers in the area and may even be considering a slight reduction in use. In either case, we would certainly hope that if monitoring studies continue to show that excessive use is occurring in the area, livestock numbers will be reduced.

I hope the above description provides a clear understanding of the position our agency is taking with respect to the Buck and Bald Mountain situation. If you have any questions on this matter, please feel free to advise.

Sincerely,

COPY Original Signed
by William A. Molini
Director
William A. Molini
Director

RPM:pw

cc: Ed Spang
Dawn Lappin
Region II