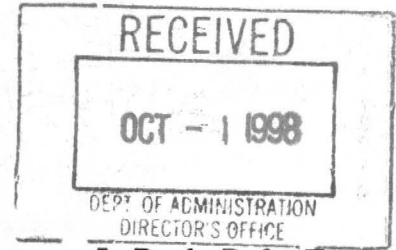




United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Elko Field Office
3900 East Idaho Street
Elko, Nevada 89801-4611



In Reply Refer To:
4720 (NV-012)

SEP 29 1998

Dear Reader:

This letter is to inform you that the Elko Field Office intends to remove wild horses from the Antelope Valley, Goshute and Spruce-Pequop Herd Management Areas (HMAs), in an attempt to achieve the appropriate management levels (AMLs) in each HMA. Any wild horses found residing outside of designated HMAs will also be gathered and removed or, if the animals do not meet the age-selective removal criteria, they will be placed back into the nearest HMA from where they were found. The specific removal dates are not known at this time, but the removals are scheduled to occur between October 1, 1998 and February 28, 1999. The three HMAs are in very close proximity and there are no fences or other barriers preventing the horses from moving from one HMA to another, therefore, the three HMAs will be treated as a "complex". The Elko Office will also be working with the Ely Office in coordinating the gather to include the Antelope HMA in the Ely District.

The Wells Resource Management Plan Wild Horse Amendment and Environmental Assessment (BLM August 2, 1993) established an initial herd size for each HMA. The Amendment stated that adjustments to the initial herd size will be based on monitoring and grazing allotment evaluations. Since 1993, the BLM has attempted to maintain wild horses at or near the initial herd size through periodic removals. Capture Plans and corresponding Environmental Assessments (EAs) for the Antelope Valley, Goshute and Spruce-Pequop HMAs were made available to the public for comments and scoping. The Spruce-Pequop Capture Plan and EA (BLM/EK/PL-037) were approved on October 17, 1993. The Goshute Capture Plan and EA (BLM/EK/PL-93-054) were approved on November 8, 1993 and the Antelope Valley Capture Plan and EA (BLM/EK/PL-94/022) were approved on July 21, 1994. Based on these documents, gathers have taken place in 1993 (Goshute and Spruce-Pequop HMAs), 1994 (Antelope Valley HMA) and 1995/1996 (Goshute HMA).

The Spruce Final Multiple Use Decision was signed and sent to the public on January 30, 1998. The development of this document was intensively scoped with the public beginning in May 1995 and culminating with the final decision in 1998. The Spruce Final Multiple Use Decision (FMUD) set an appropriate management level (AML) for wild horses for the Spruce Allotment. The Spruce Allotment encompasses the entire Spruce-Pequop HMA and large portions of the Antelope Valley and Goshute HMAs. As a result of the Spruce FMUD the AML for wild horses is as follows:

Herd Management Area	AML for the Spruce Allotment	AML - Range to be Managed - Spruce Allotment	Initial Herd Size as per Amendment by HMA	Adjusted Initial Herd Size by HMA (as per FMUD)	Current Numbers by HMA
Antelope Valley	181	110 - 181	240	181-299	524
Goshute	50	29 - 50	160	104-178	537
Spruce-Pequop	82	57 - 82	82	57-82	287
Total	417	260 - 417	482	342-559	1348

The range of horses to be managed is between the low and high end of AML. By reducing horses to the low end of the range, it allows the horses a reprieve from gathers every one or two years and instead puts each HMA on a three or four year gather cycle. However, due to the recent decline in the number of horses placed into private care through the Adopt-A-Horse program, it is anticipated that the current proposed gather will only reduce numbers to the upper end of AML in each of the three HMAs. Therefore, approximately 299 horses will remain in the Antelope Valley HMA; 178 horses will remain in the Goshute HMA and 82 horses will remain in the Spruce-Pequop HMA.

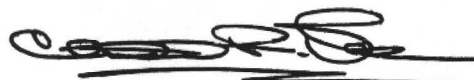
As the allotment evaluations are completed for the remaining grazing allotments contained within the Antelope Valley and Goshute HMAs, the AML for wild horses may again be adjusted.

Under current policy, any Nevada removal action that occurs between November 15, 1998 and February 28, 1999 will include fertility control research. Approximately 100 to 150 mares over the age of nine years will be given a single inoculation treatment for immunocontraception prior to her release back into her respective HMA. Treated mares may be freezemarked on the hip for further identification while tracking the animals for the fertility research. They will not need to be held any longer than untreated horses prior to being released back into the HMA. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the BLM and other Federal Agencies to prepare a report which documents whether a proposed action would have an impact on our environment. An environmental assessment (EA-NV-010-92-076) analyzing the impacts of fertility control research was prepared by the Elko Field Office in 1992 and is available upon request.

This removal does not constitute a new decision. The capture methods remain the same as stated in the above listed Gather Plans and Environmental Assessments. Therefore, as stated in the Gather Plans, a new decision record/finding of no significant impact (DR/FONSI) is not required to achieve or maintain the established initial herd size through removal of excess animals.

If you have any questions regarding the Antelope Valley Complex removal, please contact Kathy McKinstry, Elko Field Office Wild Horse Specialist, at the above address or phone (702) 753-0200.

Sincerely,



CLINTON R. OKE
Assistant District Manager
Renewable Resources

1 Enclosure

1. General Location Map (1p)

