

Status of Wild Horse and Burro Program in Nevada  
February 1978

Wild horses exist in every Nevada county. The map (Enclosure 1) shows where wild horses and burros existed at the time of BLM's 1975 inventory, the last complete one conducted in the state. The largest concentrations are near Tonopah, Austin, Winnemucca, and in northern Washoe County.

Nevada, with about 35,550 wild horses as of 1977, has the largest wild horse population of any state as shown by the chart (Enclosure 2). We estimate their numbers are increasing at an average of 18 percent per year. Removal and disposal of some excess animals is being accomplished through a gathering and adoption program. And, in order to maintain manageable wild horse herds, we must continue to remove excess animals from the range.

Current estimates of forage demand on Nevada's range indicate about:

<u>AUMS</u>	
446,000	Wild horses and burros* (35,550 horses and 1,568 burros)
222,820	Wildlife (132,836 animals including antelope, deer, elk and bighorn sheep); does not include non-game species. AUMs calculated on basis of livestock AUMs.
2,060,000	Livestock (No. of licensees is 780).**

\*includes a portion of Nevada administered by the Susanville District.

\*\*includes areas in Nevada administered by the Susanville and Boise Districts.

Forage allocation by animal unit months (AUMs) for all users, including the optimum number of horses to be managed in Nevada, will be determined by land use planning currently underway. These determinations will be based on data gathered in the planning process which the BLM calls management framework planning (MFP). In addition to writing and revising MFPs, BLM is required to complete 18 grazing environmental statements (ES) within the next 11 years. A substantial part of the information needed for the ESs will come from the MFPs. To accomplish these ESs a priority schedule (Enclosure 3) was established, based on availability of data; in other words, those areas where the most data is already available will be done first.

Until these management framework land use plans are completed, the BLM will determine forage allocations on a case-by-case basis. As an interim measure, BLM has been removing horses from critical forage areas. Also some ranchers have taken voluntary reductions of livestock grazing due to range conditions. Livestock non-use in 1977 amounted to 627,000 AUMs (drought, horses, beef prices, reduction of herds).

Since June 1975 Nevada has removed some 2,654 horses. The gathering operation has been highly successful because of the amendment to the wild horse act which now allows helicopters to be used by the managing agencies. Through the Palomino Valley facility 1,324 horses have been adopted. The facility consists of 149 acres, including 13 corrals, and a building which houses equipment and an office (Enclosure 4). Currently, 382 horses are being held in the corrals.

There are only three methods of disposal allowed under the law--relocation, destruction, and placement under custodial care. The first method is not feasible and the second is not used unless absolutely necessary. Therefore, BLM has been using the third method up to the present time. The horses being processed through the Palomino Valley facility are all up for adoption, but many are older animals and it is extremely difficult to find custodians for these. In addition, BLM has experienced some difficulty with the Palomino corrals. Because of the difficulty in placing horses with custodians, numbers of animals have been held for a much longer period than planned. Even though a veterinarian averaged 5 days a week at the corral facility, the exceptionally wet weather in late December caused considerable death loss of old and weak animals. Some of the death loss was caused by sand compaction which results from "ground feeding" over an extended period.

Our publicity efforts to explain the program and recruit custodians have been extensive. On a nationwide basis, there have been national TV news and feature programs on ABC and CBS; news accounts in home town newspapers and surrounding areas of horses adopted in 1975; magazine articles in Newsweek, McCalls, TV Guide, Weekly Reader, Family Circle, Family Weekly, Sunset, Western's World, American Horseman, Horse Illustrated, and Nevada Magazine. News clippings sent to this office have come from all over the U.S. and include articles from the Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Sacramento Bee, Oakland Tribune, Salt Lake City Tribune, Dalton Massachusetts Record, Chicago Sun, Anchorage Alaska Daily Times, San Antonio Express News, Government Lands Digest, The Fund for Animals, Christian Science Monitor, Wilmington Delaware News, St. Louis Post Dispatch, Colorado Springs Sun, Baltimore Sun, and the New York Post. In addition, there have been TV spots done by movie actress Amanda Blake and the late Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) as part of the American Heritage TV series shown during the Bicentennial Year. A 90-second TV news spot also was sent to over 400 TV stations across the nation in November 1977 to encourage adoption.

The cost of operating the wild horse program in Nevada has been extensive as shown below:

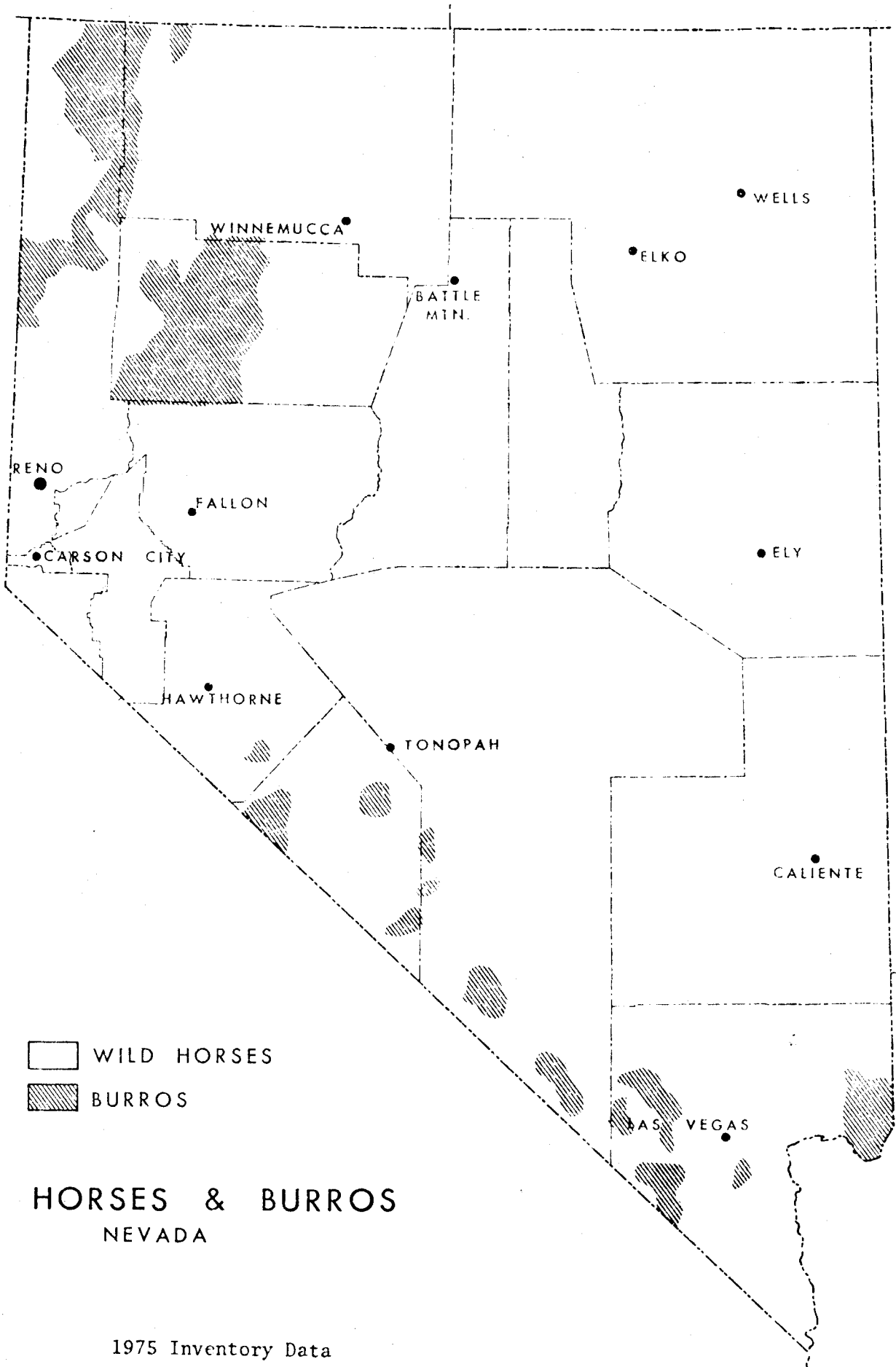
	<u>February 8, 1978</u>
Number of horses captured	2,654
Cost to capture	\$219,000.00
Average cost per horse to capture	82.00
Number of horses being held (1/31/78)	382

Cost to date 1/31/78) to hold and care for horses	\$410,000.00
Current cost to hold, feed and care per horse/day	\$ 1.25
Initial cost of Palomino Valley Holding Facility (150 acres with corrals and well)	\$ 59,000.00
Expenditures for additions and modifications of Palomino Valley Holding Facility	\$ 35,000.00
Present capacity of Palomino Valley Facility	700 head
Additional capacity needed at Palomino Valley	700 head
Total cost of wild horse and burro program in fiscal year 1977	\$798,000.00
Funds available for current fiscal year	\$469,900.00

BLM recognizes the limitations of the adoption program and the necessity to find other solutions to an ever increasing problem. While organizations like the American Horse Protection Association try to discredit the entire program (Enclosure 5), the organizations who participated in the Wild Horse Forum held in Reno last year have tried to help us find reasonable answers to the problems by adopting resolutions for our consideration (Enclosure 6) that they would support.

Handouts:

1. Map of Nevada's wild horse areas
2. Chart
3. Proposed schedule of Grazing ES
4. Photo
5. AHPA Newsletter (2)
6. Resolutions by Wild Horse Forum
7. WHI portion of S2475 and HR10587



# WILD HORSES & BURROS

NEVADA

1975 Inventory Data

ARIZONA

39

CALIFORNIA

3,745

COLORADO

990

IDAHO

1,200

MONTANA

305

NEW MEXICO

70

NEVADA

\* 31,800

OREGON

4,050

UTAH

2,180

WYOMING

9,090

IN ADDITION TO THE WILD HORSE POPULATION MOST OF CALIFORNIA'S 3,745 HORSES, MANAGED BY THE SUSANVILLE DISTRICT, ARE ON NEVADA LANDS

0 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 5,000 6,000 7,000 8,000 9,000 10,000 20,000 30,000

TOTAL ESTIMATED WILD HORSE POPULATION 53,469

NSO  
1/12/75

PROPOSED GRATING IS SCHEDULE

Area	Name	Acres (000's)	Completion Dates				
			SIM	URP	PAV	MFP-2	IS
1	Caliente	3414	-	4/78	5/78	7/78	9/79
2	Paradise-Denio	3646	-	9/78	10/78	1/79	3/80
3	Reno Area	681	8/80	12/80	1/81	9/81	4/83
4	Las Vegas	2690	3/82	6/82	7/82	3/85	9/84
5	Elko	3260	3/82	6/82	7/82	8/83	9/84
6	Tonopah	4043	3/82	6/82	7/82	3/85	9/84
7	Schell	4183	3/83	6/83	7/83	3/84	9/85
8	Sonoma-Gerlach	4555	3/84	6/84	7/84	3/85	9/86
9	Esmeralda	3503	3/84	6/84	7/84	3/85	9/86
10	Fallon	2422	3/85	6/85	7/85	3/86	9/87
11	Wells	4142	3/85	6/85	7/85	3/86	9/87
12	Walker	1947	3/86	6/86	7/86	3/87	9/88
13	Egan	3826	3/86	6/86	7/86	3/87	9/88
14	Shoshone-Eureka	4371	3/86	6/86	7/86	3/87	9/88