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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
DRAFT WILD HORSE AND BURRO PROGRAM POLICY
April 1987

Wild horses and burros are an important part of the national heritage. Consistent with laws governing the administration of public lands and in accordance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act (Public Law 92-195, as amended), wild horses and burros are protected and managed on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Wild horse and burro populations are controlled primarily through humane removal and disposition of excess wild horses and burros as provided in the Act.

Consultation

The Bureau shall consult and cooperate with the Forest Service, Federal and State wildlife agencies, other affected Government agencies, applicable advisory committees, concerned public and private organizations, individuals with special expertise, and affected interests in the development of programs and plans for the protection, management, and control of wild horses and burros.

Planning

Wild horses and burros shall be considered comparably with other resource values on each herd area in the formulation of resource management plans. The planning process shall provide the basis for determining where wild horses and burros will be managed, establishing the number of wild horses and burros that constitute appropriate management levels, and identifying herd management objectives. The appropriate management level is expressed as a median above and below which a herd will be allowed to fluctuate over a 3- to 5-year period. It is BLM's objective to reach the appropriate management level within 3 years of the completion of planning and to maintain it within the determined range unless modified by subsequent planning or monitoring.

Concerned individuals and organizations shall be given adequate notice to comment and participate in the development of resource management plans and herd management area plans for wild horses and burros.

Management and Protection of Wild Horses and Burros on Public Lands

The Bureau shall manage and protect wild horses and burros within herd management areas as integral components of the public lands on the basis of multiple use and in a manner that ensures a sustained population of healthy, free-roaming animals. Management of wild horses and burros shall take into account the needs of wildlife species, particularly endangered species. Management actions shall be at the minimum level that allows attainment of herd and habitat objectives and protects the range from deterioration associated with overpopulation.

The distribution of wild horses and burros is not limited to the public lands. Where integral or extensive portions of herd areas are privately controlled, the Bureau shall seek to provide for wild horse and burro habitat needs and protection through cooperative agreements with owners of private lands intermingled with public land.

The Bureau designates herd management areas as wild horse and burro ranges only when it is determined to be in the public interest and does not create conflicts with other resource uses.

The Bureau shall use methods recommended by the National Academy of Sciences' Committee on Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros to estimate each herd's size, distribution, composition, and rate of increase. These parameters, as well as habitat condition and utilization, shall be monitored over time to ensure that management is based on the most accurate information possible. Existing population and habitat studies shall be replicated at the same time of year and under similar conditions to enable the study of trends in these parameters.

The Bureau shall pursue and coordinate research necessary to address issues related to wild horse and burro management, including fertility control in horses to determine the practicality of this concept in herd management.

Removal of Wild Horses and Burros

Priority shall be given to removal of wild horses and burros from private lands when the landowner requests their removal. Next, animals shall be removed from the public lands when resource damage is occurring or imminent. Finally, animals shall be removed from the public lands as necessary to maintain the appropriate management level.

When wild horses and burros are gathered, animals unlikely to recover from sickness or injuries, as well as those that cannot fend for themselves because of age, shall be destroyed at the capture site whenever feasible. A veterinarian shall determine the need for destruction, except in situations where immediate destruction is required as an act of mercy. Animals shall be destroyed in accordance with guidelines established by the American Veterinary Medical Association, and disposed of in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and local requirements.

Transportation and Handling of Wild Horses and Burros

Bureau employees and contractors shall carry out quality control procedures to maintain equipment and facilities to minimize stress and risk of injury to wild horses and burros during capture and processing for adoption. Individuals involved in the capture and processing of wild horses and burros shall be instructed in appropriate methods of loading, unloading, sorting, and other necessary handling of the animals.

The Bureau or its agents shall transport wild horses and burros in equipment that minimizes the risk of injury to the animals. The use of straight-deck trailers is preferred for transporting wild horses.

Disposition of Healthy Excess Wild Horses and Burros

A wild horse or burro that has been removed from the public lands is available for adoption after completion of its processing at a BLM preparation center. The Bureau shall use the five-step process outlined below for the disposition of excess animals. Healthy excess animals shall either be placed into the

humane care of qualified individuals and organizations through one of the first four steps or humanely destroyed as required by the Act.

1. The regular adoption program at full fee for burros and most horses. By regulation, fees are now \$125 per horse and \$75 per burro.
2. Special adoptions at altered fees. These include taking less desirable horses, on a test basis, to satellite (temporary) adoption centers and allowing individuals to adopt them at a reduced fee. Also included in this step are fee waiver adoptions, such as large-scale, power-of-attorney adoptions and adoptions by State-chartered, nonprofit humane organizations.
3. Training of horses by prison inmates, with trained animals then made available for adoption.
4. Maintenance on private land of wild horses and burros not adopted under steps 1 through 3, using private funds provided by individuals or organizations.
5. Unless an animal is placed in private care within 90 days following its availability for adoption, it is concluded that no adoption demand exists for that animal. The animal shall therefore be destroyed.

To provide reasonable opportunities for adoption, the Bureau shall make periodic public announcements on the availability of horses and burros for adoption; establish centers where animals can be adopted, including temporary centers at selected sites and times throughout the country; and enlist the aid of interest groups and individuals to promote the adoption program, assist in adoption efforts, and provide information to adopters on gentling and caring for the animals.

Adoption fees for horses shall be adjusted periodically to reflect the price of horses of similar quality in the private market.

Protection of Adopted Wild Horses and Burros

When a complaint of inhumane treatment is received, physical inspection of the animal is carried out as soon as practical, and the Bureau shall take whatever action is necessary to ensure humane treatment. Priority shall be given to situations where the greatest number of animals are at risk. In adoptions where 25 or more animals are maintained at a single location, the Bureau shall make at least two on-site inspections within 1 year of adoption.

Transfer of Title to Adopters of Wild Horses and Burros

The Bureau shall expedite transfer of title to adopters who have humanely maintained wild horses and burros for a period of 1 year by automatically conveying title, unless complaints of inhumane care or conditions are registered to BLM and substantiated by investigation.