

2-20-08

Nellis



# United States Department of the Interior



## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Nevada State Office  
P.O. Box 12000 (1340 Financial Blvd.)  
Reno, Nevada 89520-0006  
<http://www.nv.blm.gov>



In Reply Refer To:  
4700 (NV-930)

FEB 20 2008

Catherine Barcomb  
Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses  
885 Eastlake Boulevard  
Carson City, NV 89704

Dear Ms. Barcomb:

At the most recent Wild Horse Commission meeting, I mentioned that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is continuing work towards development of a herd management area plan (HMAP) for the Nevada Wild Horse Range (NWHR). One of the management strategies BLM is considering for the NWHR is managing a portion of the herd as a non-breeding population of geldings. The Commission expressed interest in providing BLM with recommendations which would have potential to lead to Standard Operating Procedures for managing geldings within other Nevada herd management areas (HMAs).

To date, BLM has identified the following proposed management requirements relative to the NWHR:

- Limit gelding to studs between 5 and 15 years of age.
- Transport studs to the nearest available BLM facility for gelding.
- Return geldings to the range once they are healed from the surgery (an estimated 2-6 weeks).
- Hold geldings in a separate pen to facilitate observation by a licensed veterinarian for a minimum of two weeks prior to their release to prevent the risk for introduction of illness into the wild herd.
- Brand geldings with a "G" high on their hip so they are visible from the air and not subject to recapture during future gathers.
- Post treatment monitoring would include visual observations of social behavior at least once during the spring-summer and fall-winter seasons for up to two years following treatment.

Would you and your Commissioners be willing to take the time to review the proposed management requirements listed above and provide us with any suggestions or recommendations you may have? This information would be needed by April 15, 2008.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Susie Stokke  
Wild Horse and Burro Program Lead,  
Nevada

cc:  
Members, Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses  
NV-052

**WILD HORSES  
GELDING OF STALLIONS ON PUBLIC LANDS**

**BLM HAS NO POLICY AND PROCEDURES  
BUT HAS PUT GELDING IN THEIR GATHER PLANS AS AN OPTION**

**CONCERNS/ISSUES:**

Temperature/time of year

Anesthesia yes/no

Who will be performing and how?

Transporting to PVC or other main facility vs field operations

Field operation policy

How long will they be held post surgery

Shots to prevent infection?

MONITORING FOR RESULTS

**PROTOCOL:**

Which horses will be targeted

Age

Color

Conformation

Who will be making the decisions and those decisions need to be based on policy

**STUDY**

Parameters of doing this as an initial study

What are you looking for in the study (bands, aggression, recovery time, etc)  
The need to set up criteria to study and look for.

WHERE are you going to do the initial study area(s)? Should be in locations that are easily monitored for results. Good volunteer base. (Certainly NOT NELLIS)

Set up dates, times for monitoring and document results, distributing reports and to "who"?

Should be on healthy herds and animals, not failing populations that would skew results

**ANALYSIS**

What is the Cost Benefit to doing such an action?

What is the expected Herd/Recruitment/Fertility Control benefit to such an action?

## Cathy Barcomb

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**From:** Cathy Barcomb  
**Sent:** Monday, March 03, 2008 10:08 AM  
**To:** 'Susie\_Stokke@blm.gov'  
**Subject:** RE: nellis gelding proposal

Susie

I just got a letter today for Dr. Kirk and have put his forwarding addy on there and he should have it in a few days.

The letter from Feb 15th is not from the Commission, its from this office. I know that might be hard to understand, two separate entities, but let me try to explain.

As the Administrator working under Allen Biaggi, he is my supervisor, not the Commissioners. The Commission is like many other Commissions in the State, appointed by the Governor to serve as a sounding board for the public and make recommendations. Some Commissions have regulatory authority but my Commission, like most others, have no authority, they are a sounding board. They can discuss things in an open forum commission meeting, and can make "recommendations" to Allen and myself. It is then up to Allen and I to discuss recommendations, and Allen has the final say. If it is either something I want or the Commission as a separate entity, Allen will always have the final say.

Such as litigation, the Commissioners voted to pursue litigation and its still being investigated and discussed. But the final action would be for them to make a motion to "recommend to Allen to initiate a lawsuit." Then Allen would be the one to make the final decision to move forward or not. It will be his decision at that point. The Commission can make recommendations but they have no authority to act. Allen does take their recommendations seriously, as I do, however, he has the final say.

On gelding, this is something this office, under Allen, has brought up in front of the National Advisory Board and concerns to BLM on a National and State level. We believe this is something much larger than just insertion in a gather plan. Even if it were to be a consideration in a HMAP, there still needs to be national policy and direction. In addition to "why" is this being considered and what outcome is expected to justify this action. I realize that this was done in a few other states and seems to have been under the radar of the public, or it would have been brought up before.

If this were to be a "study", Nellis would be the last place I would think it would be done. It is hard to monitor Nellis and especially get volunteers to help already stressed BLM Districts for man hours. In the past we have supported the concept of Nellis being a completely neutered population, a sanctuary for non breeding horses. Once the draft HMAP is out I will expand on that more in a consideration for recommendations. It had been discussed years ago and don't know what appetite there would be for such a recommendation but we will try again. A sanctuary off the taxpayer roles, set number of horses, non breeding, and as older horses died, BLM could add more horses from those needing sanctuary status. No cost to the taxpayer other than BLM is doing now, monitoring and improving the water which you have to do anyway. This would mean no more gathers or expense to gather and compromise military action.

Please don't get me wrong, there has been no position taken on gelding but the letter we sent was to express out concerns and the need for a broad investigation if this is beneficial, or just a program that will spend tremendous amounts of money with no real benefit to the populations. Funding is so scarce these days and must be spent for the highest and best uses to meet management goals. It only takes one stallion to impregnate many mares, how would gelding do anything to improve fertility rates? Questions like these need to be considered.

After the Nellis gather plan that included gelding, this office got involved. I informed my Commissioners at the last meeting so they would know what the concern was and then be able to get involved separately as a Commission.

Sorry this got so long but was just trying to explain the separation of duties and posts between Allen, the Commission, and myself. Please ask questions if this is confusing.

Cathy

PS It is always alright to contact a Commissioner as an individual and not as a Commissioner and realizing that they are not acting on behalf of the Commission. I am sure Dr. Kirk would be very happy to get involved as he has offered numerous times in the past.

On his addy, we don't give out Commissioners addresses per their request, we forward from here. If he were to give you his address that would be his own choice.

Question: Dr. Kirk asked me about the gelding letter he received a few weeks ago from you with his address on it and wondered how you got it? I see on the letter you cc'd all the Commissioners, where did the addresses come from? No problem as it was you, but just trying to find out so they are not leaked again, there are some pretty crazy's out there as you well know and keeping all of our home addresses safe is a major concern.

How is Chance doing? I see the special education funding is making the news quite a bit lately. It should and the gov't should be ashamed.

-----Original Message-----

From: Susie\_Stokke@blm.gov [mailto:Susie\_Stokke@blm.gov]  
Sent: Monday, March 03, 2008 9:36 AM  
To: Cathy Barcomb  
Subject: Re: nellis gelding proposal

Cathy,

we anticipate having the draft HMAP out for review in about mid-March or thereabouts -- ahead of your next meeting, hence, the request for a response by April 15th --- which allows time for the Commission to review and provide comment. I also sent a letter (draft attached) specifically to Dr. Spratling and Dr. Kirk based on the Advisory Board recommendation and would appreciate hearing from them if possible by March 15th. We would like to incorporate their professional opinion as "veterinarians" in order to include those suggestions in the draft HMAP before it comes out if at all possible. I don't know if it is okay for Dr. Kirk to do that, based on your Commission guidelines? But we would take it as a professional opinion, not a Commission recommendation.

Based on the above, am I correct in assuming we do not yet need to respond to your letter of February 19th?

(See attached file: Spratling ltr, Nellis Gelding Proposal\_2.08.doc)

PS -- the advisory board meeting went okay -- a lot of interest from the board in the gelding proposal.

"Cathy Barcomb"  
<mustangs@wildhor  
se.nv.gov>

03/03/2008 09:16  
AM

<Susie\_Stokke@nv.blm.gov>

To

cc

Subject

nellis

Susie

I got your letter, think our letters crossed in the mail.....you said you might have a draft of the Nellis HMAP....are you going to send that out? It was brought up by the military as well at the JMAC meeting last week that Christine attended that they had anticipated it but hadn't seen it yet.

For our Commission, we will have to wait for the next Commission meeting for them to discuss it or to set up a sub group to work with you on gelding issues. They can't take any action in between since no sub group had been established at that time. I still operate as the state office under Allen and will be happy to work on it in the mean time as we have done in the past.

Just let me know, Cathy

PS How was the Advisory Board meeting, lucky you got out before we got snowed in and flights cancelled.