

Nellis

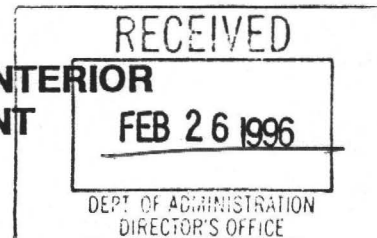
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2-26-96



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Caliente Field Station**

P.O. Box 237
Caliente, Nevada 89008



In Reply Refer To:

4720.2
(NV-055.07)

FEB 22 1996

Dear Interested Public:

Please find attached a copy of the 1995/96 Nellis Gather closure memo written by Alan Shepherd, Caliente Field Station's Wild Horse Specialist, after finishing this year's gather. The closure memo contains some information on the events surrounding the gather as well as information on the overall condition of the horses and their habitat.

If you have any questions, please contact Alan at the Caliente Field Station office.

Sincerely,

Curtis G. Tucker
Caliente Field Station Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1995/96 Nellis Gather Closure Memo (4 pgs)



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Caliente Resource Area Office

P.O. Box 237
Caliente, Nevada 89008

In Reply Refer To:

4720.2
(NV-055.07)

MEMORANDUM

TO: Area Manager, NV-055 *ERT*

FROM: Wild Horse Specialist

SUBJECT: 1995-96 Nellis Gather Summary

FEB 22 1996

The Caliente Resource Area conducted its annual wild horse gather on the Nellis Air Force Range and the Nevada Wild Horse Range (NWHR) during the weeks of 12/14-23/95 and 01/02-22/96. The gather was very successful and was able to almost secure its mission - achieving the appropriate management level (AML) on the Nevada Wild Horse Range.

This year's gather started on 12/14/95 within the Kawich Valley portion of the NWHR. The last time this area of the NWHR had been gathered was September 1993. Over a 4 day period, the capture crew gathered a total of 576 horses. The following is a breakdown of the animals captured within Kawich Valley.

Shippable age horses ¹		Release age horses		1995 Foals	Recruitment Rate ²	Total
Studs	Mares	Studs	Mares			
118	118	193	147	110	23.6%	576

¹ Total include 1995 foals
² Recruitment rate = 1995 foals divided by total horses minus 1995 foals

The horses that were gathered were in fair condition with horses ranging from very poor to good condition. The forage supply appeared to be sufficient for the number of animals handled but the lack to sufficient water resources as well as their age may be the cause of the lower condition classes. All the water sources are functioning properly but the amount of water available to the horses at any one time is not sufficient to allow all the horses to drink their fill. The horses are basically consuming all the water that is available in the troughs or pond and then are waiting for a period of time to try to get more water as it comes out of the pipe system. The weaker animals just are not receiving the amount of water which they require and their overall body condition is showing this.

Stonewall Flat was the second area gathered. Gathering started on 12/20 and finished on 12/21 with 96 horses and burros being captured. The following is a breakdown of the horses handled over the two day period.

Shippable age horses ¹		Release age horses		1995 Foals	Recruitment Rate ²	Total
Studs	Mares	Studs	Mares			
33	18	26	14	5	5.8%	96 ³
¹ Total include 1995 foals ² Recruitment rate = 1995 foals divided by total horses minus 1995 foals ³ Total number of animals includes 5 burros						

The overall condition of the horses captured within the Stonewall Flat was fair with a number (10-15) of the horses in the fair to poor classes. The mares that were handled were generally the animals in the lowest condition classes because they were not strong enough to compete with the stallions for the limited water supply. The animals that were gathered this year are in better condition than they were 2 years ago (09/93) when we last handled these horses. The removal of over 200 horses in 1993 and the 56 animals this year should benefit the horses that were released.

One point of interest from this area was that we had two foals come in with lion and/or coyote bite marks on them. One foal appeared to be fully recovered from his encounter with the predator but later died at the Palomino Valley Center. I am uncertain if the death was due to complications from the attack or a reaction to the routine vaccinations given at PVC. The second foal (a filly) was extremely sick when we captured her. She had open festering sores on her flank, hind quarters, and hock from where a lion had grabbed her. After being treated with antibiotics at the trap and then sent to Las Vegas for additional care, she is reported to be doing very well.

The gather operation resumed on 01/02/96 following a break over the Christmas and New Year's holiday. Gold Flat, Cactus Flat, and the Cactus Mountain Range within the central portion of the Nellis Range were the last areas for the gather operation. This central portion of the range is where the bulk of the horses reside within the Nellis Range. For the last 2 years this area has been gathered with a helicopter and has been much more effective than water trapping the horses as previously done due to security concerns. The gather crew captured a total of 1582 horses from this area. The following is a summary of the horses captured during the period 01/03-14/96.

Shippable age horses ¹		Release age horses		1995 Foals	Recruitment Rate ²	Total
Studs	Mares	Studs	Mares			
344	427	431	376	354	28.9%	1578 ³
¹ Total include 1995 foals ² Recruitment rate = 1995 foals divided by total horses minus 1995 foals ³ Difference between total in report and total on table is due to euthanasia/death loss						

The condition of these horses was better than the previous two areas with most of the horses in fair to good condition. Forage and water, for the most part, was adequate and the general appearance of the horses showed this. Water availability in the Cactus Range and the Silver Bow area is of concern as the troughs are continually empty and the horses must wait to get a drink. The sources are flowing at the usual rates but this year's dry conditions are requiring the horses to utilize more water and its not available to them.

This year's gather was the first time that a majority of the Silver Bow/Breen Creek horses and the Cactus Range horses were captured. The majority of our shippable age horses came from these two areas. The gathering of these areas will allow us to better estimate the remaining horse population and should show beneficial results in the future.

A third lion cut foal was captured within the Cactus Range. The foal was less than a week or more old and quite healthy. We treated the foal with antibiotics and sent her and her mother to PVC for adoption. Last report was that the foal and mare were doing fine.

With the start of trapping on the 01/03/96, the management of wild horses on the NWHR and Nellis Range entered a new phase of management - immuno-contraceptive fertility control. Following routine capture and processing, a percentage of mares identified for release back to the range were treated with fertility control vaccinations. Dr. John Turner, Jr, Dr. Jay Kirkpatrick and their associates had the objective to inoculate between 200 and 300 mares with the fertility vaccinations to help reduce the present rate of increase within the Nellis herd. Dr. Turner and his crew treated a total of 267 mares from the Gold Flat/Cactus Flat areas during the period 01/04-08. These mares were held for between 13-16 days at a separate facility to allow the mares to settle down and to let the vaccine begin its work. Sixty-seven (67) mares received a one-shot treatment and 200 mares received a two-shot treatment with the second vaccination occurring on the 20th of January to complete the vaccination process. The fertility control treatment has no affect on the current year's foal that the mare may be carrying but will inhibit the successful breeding of the mare for up to 2 years following foaling. Dr. Turner will be monitoring periodically to determine the success of the project.

Overall, this year's gather within the Nellis Range was very successful. By removing over 1050 horses, the horses remaining will have reduced pressure for the limited water available. The application of the fertility control will benefit the herd in the long run as well as supplying necessary information to assist in its use within other herds across the Bureau.

This year's gather was able to gather horses from Silver Bow/Breen Creek and the Cactus Range that normally eluded our capture due to security concerns or early closure to previous gathers. With the completion of this gather, we were able to visit every principle horse use area within the NWHR and the Nellis Range and now we can formulate a more approximate population size than ever before. The following is the current population estimate based the 1995/96 horse gather.

2255	Total capture
1062	Total shipped
13	Death loss
10	Old horses returned from PVC
300	Estimate of horses not captured
1490	Estimated population after gather

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Continue to work with Dr. Turner and his associates on the evaluation and use of the fertility control vaccine on wild horses. The information gathered from the Nellis herd will be beneficial to the future management of wild horses.
2. Continue to monitor the perennial water sources as currently being done. The very dry condition of this fall and early winter has put a stress on the horses within the Nellis Range. It may be necessary to evaluate the existing appropriate management level (AML) in order to provide more water for the remaining horses. At the existing flow rates, there is not enough water in the troughs to provide sufficient amounts to each horse that comes in to the trough. Once a band of horses has watered, there generally is not any water left to water any additional horses so they have to wait extended periods of time or not drink at all. **Water as always will be the deciding factor for this horse herd.**
3. Conduct use pattern mapping prior to spring green up to evaluate the current year's use. Based on visual observation of the perennial forage on the Nellis Range and the body condition of the horses, the area responded well to the wet winter and spring of 1994/95 and provided adequate forage for the horses.





**COMMISSION FOR THE
PRESERVATION OF WILD HORSES**

255 W. Moana Lane

Suite 207A

Reno, Nevada 89509

(702) 688-2626

March 4, 1996

Mr. Alan Shepherd
Wild Horse Specialist
Caliente Field Station
P.O. Box 237
Caliente, Nevada 89008

Subject: Nellis Gather

Dear Mr. Shepherd:

Thank you for providing us the summary data for the Nellis Gather. As you are aware, the Commission had specific concerns of the proposed gather plan. Data provided to us do not satisfy the issues addressing the plan.

We would like you to provide us the additional data regarding mare longevity and production. These data were essential to future evaluation of the fertility project.

Please provide us with the additional information in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Barcomb".

CATHERINE BARCOMB
Executive Director
cc. Clearinghouse