July 2004

Wild Horse and Burro Program

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- The Wild Horse and Burro Program has two primary goals:
  - Managing the wild horse herd in the Pryor Mountains; and
  - Adoption of excess animals from the Pryors and other herd management areas.
- The BLM removed 7 horses from the Pryor Range in September 2003; all the animals were successfully adopted.
- Fertility control was initiated in the herd during September 2001. Thirty-six yearling and 2-year-old mares have received a one-year PZP vaccine. The intent is to vaccinate young mares in these age classes every year in order to allow them a chance to fully develop prior to becoming pregnant. Fertility control in older mares (14 years of age and older) began in 2003. The intent is to allow these mares a year or more of existence on the range in better physical condition. The long-term intent is to contracept these mares for the remainder of their lives.
- Use of fertility control on the Pryor Range continues after careful consideration of natural mortality by mountain lion predation. During the winter of 2004, almost 70 percent of the yearlings were lost and during the summer of 2004 more than 70 percent of the foals were lost.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

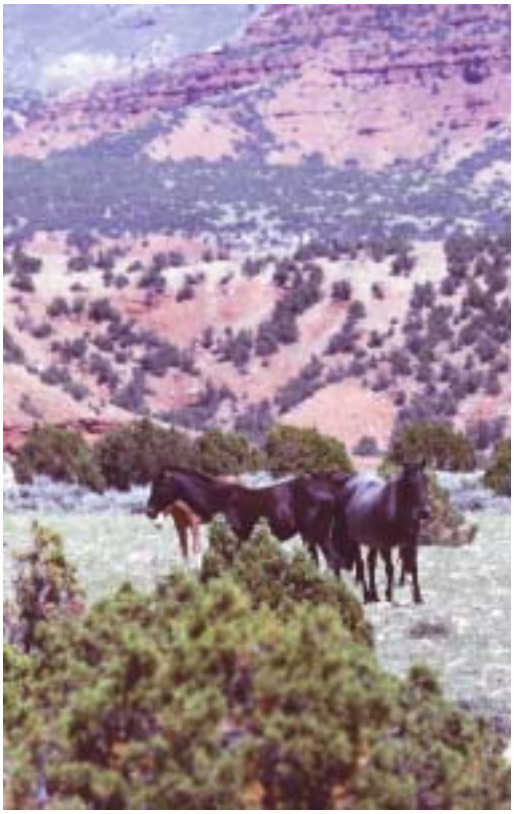
- The Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 mandates the BLM to manage wild horses and burros.
- The Act directs the BLM to manage self-sustaining herds in balance with available resources under a multiple-use prescription.
- The Act also directs the BLM to remove excess animals and place them with qualified adopters.
- In addition, BLM is responsible for compliance inspections and titling.
- Montana's only free-roaming wild horses are in the Pryor Mountains, about 60 miles south of Billings.
- These animals are reputed to be of Spanish ancestry, as evidenced by genetic studies.
- The Pryor Mountain Herd Area Management Plan, written in 1984 and revised in 1992, guides

management of the Pryor horses.

- Excess wild horses from the Pryor Range are usually adopted at the Britton Springs Administrative Site at the base of the Pryors. In 2003, 7 young stallions were sucessfully adopted using BLM's internet adoption program.
- Since 1984, the BLM has placed more than 15,000 horses with qualified adopters in Montana/Dakotas.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- The BLM continues to manage the Pryor herd for optimum benefits to the animals and the fragile ecology.
- We continue with a major revision of the Herd Management Area Plan to incorporate results of more recent genetic viability studies, use of immunocontraceptive (fertility control) techniques for population control, ecosystem modeling, and updates on ecological site inventories.
- The BLM will also continue with the well-reasoned application of fertility control to the herd, providing both humane, genetic and population control benefits.



WHO ELSE IS CONCERNED?

- Local and national groups often get involved in issues surrounding the Pryor Mountain horses.
- The Pryor Mountain Mustang Association gives strong local support.
- Some groups are interested in minimizing any human management of the horses; some are concerned primarily about humane treatment of the horses; and some are concerned about the economics of the horse program.
- Wild horse issues attract national and international media attention.
- Some people are concerned over animals going to slaughter. However once the animals are titled, BLM has no authority.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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