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The Bureau of Land Management is planning to apply fertility control to both younger and older mares in the Pryor Mountain wild horse herd this summer in an effort to improve the quality of life for these animals. These mares include five yearling fillies, four 2-year-old fillies and seven mares 14 years and older.

The purpose of the fertility control is to provide one year of infertility in order to give the younger mares an opportunity to fully mature before becoming pregnant, or to fully recover before becoming pregnant again. In addition, the health of the older mares would be improved during the period in their life when they are most vulnerable to significant impacts on their health and well-being. Fertility control applied this summer would only impact 2005 pregnancies.

The proposed fertility control implementation is scheduled to begin no earlier than July 12, 2004, and will continue until all identified mares are successfully treated.

Several years of monitoring have shown that young mares (2 and 3-year-olds) in the Pryor Mountain herd have been producing foals. In several cases, the demands of gestation and/or lactation have had unhealthy impacts on these young mares. Foal

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production in older mares (14 years of age and older) is limited but can result in mares having poor condition and early deaths, and orphaned foals. The practice of applying fertility control to select mares will help achieve and maintain a healthy and genetically-viable Pryor Mountain wild horse population.

All vaccine will be remotely delivered by certified and experienced darters. The BLM began vaccinating young females in the Pryor Mountain herd in 2001. Previous fertility control treatment has resulted in no foals being produced by 3-year-old mares in 2003 only. Six previously treated 4-year-old mares should be able to conceive this year, and eight previously treated 3-year-old mares should be able to conceive in 2005.

The BLM analyzed the proposed action in an environmental assessment (EA) this spring with the decision record being signed on June 3, 2004.

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