

Public Lands Foundation Statement
Before the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board, October 13, 2011

Thank you for providing the opportunity to speak today. My name is George Lea, past President of The Public Lands Foundation. I am here representing our members who have thousands of years collective experience managing natural resources. No one in the Foundation receives pay for Foundation work.

The Public Lands Foundation has carefully reviewed the current wild horse and burro program. My comments today will focus on fertility control.

We can only conclude that the present direction of the program is unsustainable in its attempt to meet the requirements of the Act. Populations on the range exceed appropriate management levels and will continue to do so. Gather numbers continue to exceed adoption demand thus creating an ever-increasing cost at holding facilities. There is every reason to believe that the public is tiring of the program's cost. And, budget cuts are already in the offing.

More aggressive measures must be taken to limit population growth.

PZP is demonstrably ineffective in bringing populations in concert with AML and adoption demand. It is relatively expensive and requires reapplication in two years or, significant skewing of sex ratios to keep the number of new foals down when the mares conceive one or two years after treatment.

We continue to recommend that other lower cost, long term fertility control drugs such as SpayVac or GonaCon be used in conjunction with most all gathers. Use of these drugs would not require significant skewing of male:female ratios. Treated mares will not conceive for four years or longer and could be infertile after a second treatment. Herds treated with these drugs should be carefully monitored to determine their effectiveness in the field and to assess impacts of herd and band relationships.

The five-year research effort involving SpayVac could continue. Information garnered from it on an ongoing basis could be used to make adjustments in its use in herd management areas.

In conclusion, the Public Lands Foundation urges the Advisory Board to recommend to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture that significantly more aggressive fertility control be used in management of wild horses and burros. And, that drugs such as SpayVac and/or GonaCon be used now, not after years of additional research. The significant research regarding effectiveness and toxicology has already taken place.

Horses, burros, wildlife and the health of the land simply cannot cope with minor variations of the status quo when it comes to carrying out the mandates of the Act.

Thank you. Copies of my remarks have been made available to staff.