

Trapping Wild Horses

By Larry Hyslop



A water trap used in the Ely area

Water and bait traps are an old technique used for gathering wild horses, but their use is new for the Elko District Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). These gathers will not be used to attempt to reduce Herd Management Area (HMA) populations to their Appropriate Management Levels, since large gathers will continue to be done by helicopter. Traps will be used to hopefully remove excess wild horses from specific problem areas. Trap sites will be on the Ely District Office's Triple B Herd Management Area and Maverick-Medicine and Antelope Valley HMAs administered by the Elko District Office. These HMAs are about 60 miles south of Wells.

The trap sites will be chosen based on specific problem areas determined in the Environmental Assessment. A bait trap may be used to remove excess horses from an area not providing enough winter forage for the area horses. Water traps may be used to remove excess horses where springs cannot provide enough water for the horses' welfare.

It is known water traps will be used to remove excess wild horses from Cherry Springs where the BLM has been hauling water for several years, since the spring is not providing enough water for the horses. Although this spring is East of the Ruby Marshes, these horses have refused to move to the available water. Deer Spring in the Dolly Varden Range will be trapped because of too many horses in the area.

Contractors to do this trapping are already on file with BLM, although the specific contractor for this area and the cost per animal trapped is not known at this time.

Such an operation will require a large time investment by the contractor. Corral panels will need to be slowly added, over a period of days or weeks, around a spring or a pile of food. The wild horses will need time to get used to their presence. With the corral and open gate finally in place, some patient person will need to watch from a place of concealment, waiting for enough horses to enter the trap before springing the trap by closing the gate. The contractor will then be responsible for feeding and watering the horses before transporting them to an available short term holding facility.

Helicopter gathers usually provide for public viewing areas so people can observe the gather and the horses. The BLM will try to allow public viewing at these trap gathers, but it will be challenging and probably at a greater distance than during helicopter gathers because of the nature of the gathers.

This new gather technique will help control wild horse populations in target areas, maintain healthy wild horse herds and hopefully be in use fairly soon.

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