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Fertility Control to Continue on Pryor Wild Horse Herd

The Bureau of Land Management will begin applying fertility control to both younger and older mares in the Pryor Mountain wild horse herd on July 12, 2004. These mares include five yearling fillies, four 2-year-old fillies, and seven mares 14 years and older.

The BLM will begin the effort this year with a cautious approach. The herd currently numbers 160 total animals. To date 70 percent of the yearlings and 56 percent of the 2004 foals have succumbed to natural mortality on the range. It is believed that mountain lion predation has played a significant role in this mortality. Due to concerns for herd viability, the BLM will deliver both the prime and booster fertility control vaccine to all older mares who have already contributed to the genetics of the herd. The younger mares will not be boosted until later in the season, allowing the BLM further opportunity to evaluate mortality impacts on the herd.

The practice of applying fertility control to select mares will help achieve and maintain a healthy and genetically-viable Pryor Mountain wild horse population. The BLM began vaccinating young females in the Pryor Mountain herd in 2001.

The intent 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. All vaccine will be remotely delivered by certified and experienced darters.

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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