

# BLM WH&B NEWS



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Aug. 7, 2003

**Contact: Chris Tincher**  
405-790-1009 or 405-826-3036

## **WILD HORSES RECEIVE CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH ALL ANIMALS TEST NEGATIVE FOR EQUINE INFECTIOUS ANEMIA**

(Catoosa, Okla.) Negative test results show that the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) wild horses remain clear of Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA).

Working shoulder to shoulder with officials from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODAFF), the BLM gathered and assisted with the testing of wild horses held in Catoosa, Oklahoma yesterday.

"It was a smooth operation because we were able to bring in all of the necessary equipment and test the animals right here on site," says John Mehlhoff, BLM Field Manager in Tulsa. "We did a lot prep work to keep our horses safe and minimize direct contact between the animals and everyone involved in the testing."

The corrals are constructed with six-foot panels, with alleyways that lead the wild horses into a series of padded chutes. Mehlhoff added, "One by one we guided the wild horses into the alleyway and then into the squeeze chute for testing. We found this method reduces stress on the animals and is the safest way to work with them."

These wild horses, which were tested before being brought to Oklahoma, were required to be retested for EIA due to State of Oklahoma regulations. "Oklahoma regulations require horses within 200-yards of a positive EIA case be tested 60 days after the removal of the infected animal," says Dr. Carey Floyd, Area Veterinarian with ODAFF.

In May, a domestic horse less than 200 yards from the wild horses in Catoosa, Okla, was diagnosed with EIA. Floyd continued, "Because the wild horses had the potential of being exposed to EIA, we needed to test them again to determine whether the disease has spread."

Starting at 7 a.m., Dr. Floyd and her team of specialists carefully identified each animal by the BLM freeze mark. The information was verified and recorded before the blood was drawn from 63 wild horses. Each vial was marked and placed in a secure and controlled case awaiting further action. The entire process was completed by 9:10 a.m. Less than three hours later, a final analysis of the test results showed all of the wild horses were free of EIA.

(more)

EIA is a potentially fatal viral disease that affects members of the horse family. There is no vaccine, treatment or cure for EIA and infected horses remain carriers of the virus for life.

After the testing, all of the BLM's wild horses remained in the corrals to allow them a chance to recover from the long day. Later today the animals will be released in a new pasture to ensure that they are not exposed to EIA in the future.

“We know that a lot of people will be disappointed because they enjoy watching the wild horses as they have their morning coffee, but we need to continue to protect them from the disease,” says Mehlhoff. At this time, there is no plan to return the wild horses to the original pasture.

The BLM manages wild horses on public lands throughout the West, and removes horses when overpopulation or severe local conditions threaten their health and the rangelands they depend on for their livelihood. Once removed, these animals are not returned to public lands, but are offered for adoption to people that qualify for the program. Some animals are held on long term holding facilities until homes can be found for them.

The BLM's wild horse and burro adoption program was established in the early 1970s as part of its effort to manage wild horse and burro herds. The adoption program has successfully placed 195,000 animals, but there are 18,000 wild horses still in need of placement.

All animals that are removed from public lands and made available for adoption or placed in holding facilities receive a clean bill of health by a certified veterinarian and possess a negative Coggins test and vaccinations for other common equine diseases including West Nile.

*The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for managing the nation's public lands. With the passage of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, the Bureau gained the responsibility to care for wild horses and burros on these lands in harmony with other natural resources. When an over-population of wild horses and burros exists on these public lands, some animals are removed and offered to the general public for adoption.*

**NOTE TO EDITOR:** An adoption event will be held in Vian, Oklahoma Aug. 8 and 9. Call 1-866-4-Mustangs for more information on this other adoption events.