



WPM's Humane, High-Tech System Meets Federal Demands for Non-Lethal Control of Wild Horse and Burro Populations

Patented system includes real-time tracking of individual horses to monitor health, fertility status and location; no roundups and holding pens required.

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO, US, January 21, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (January 21, 2020) - - When the federal government approved an additional \$21 million in funding to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Wild Horse and Burro Program in late December, it came with a significant string attached: the funds can only be accessed after the agency submits a comprehensive plan for implementing a non-lethal program for population control. The program must include scientifically sound, safe and humane fertility control tools.

[Roch Hart](#), a former police detective turned ranch manager and now growing expert on wild horse reproduction management, just may have the key to the BLM's challenge and the federal funding. He and his team of engineers and software experts have developed the world's first humane system for identifying and tracking individual wild horses, delivering and documenting vaccine contraceptives, and capturing data on the animals' health and their management. And, the system does so without direct physical human intervention.

Hart, the CEO and founder of [Wildlife Protection Management \(WPM\)](#), came up with the idea of the Remote Wildlife Vaccine Delivery System while managing a 20,000-acre ranch between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, N.M. As he tended the arid land, he spent hours observing the bands of wild horses and fell in love with their hardiness, family ties and behavior. But he also noticed something less enthralling: the growing population's impact on the fragile desert ecosystem.

"I really had a dilemma on my hands," says Hart. "Here I was, a professional land manager in love with one of America's most cherished symbols of freedom. But without natural predators, the horses were doing significant damage by overgrazing and also forcing out native species like elk and deer. I had to find a solution that allowed the horses to continue to live freely, but protected the ranchlands for other species and future generations."

Over the course of three years, Hart and the WPM team created, tested, and in November 2019, patented, a system that relies on software and satellites rather than helicopters and cowboys to microchip horses and selectively deliver contraceptives to mares (females). Both are injected to the horses via a high-tech, no-stress "hub" that attracts the horses with alfalfa, hay that is like candy to equines. Once the horses enter the hub under their own free will, a video camera identifies the sex. The RFID microchip and if applicable, the contraceptive, are delivered via a dart on a tether, which insures no foreign object in the horse or trash in the environment.

The WPM system also creates a digital record of each horse it microchips so the BLM and other users can access a wealth of information online and in real-time. This includes when the individual horse was chipped and vaccinated, and when the mares need a "booster" of contraceptive. Additionally, the chips can monitor a horse's temperature, providing valuable insight into herd health and help identify potential outbreaks of disease. Digital tracking is far easier and less costly than reading freeze brands and rounding up horses to manually scan implanted RFID chips.

New Mexico State Veterinarian Ralph Zimmerman has seen WPM's system and has high hopes it will be effective in managing wild horse populations as well as other species. "Each year, the U.S. free-roaming horse population increases by an average of 20 percent, which is environmentally and financially unsustainable. WPM's system has the potential to dramatically improve population management of wild and feral horses through a more effective, safe vaccine program and by eliminating the stress and expense of helicopters and roundups."

Hart is working with Sandia National Labs to add facial recognition technology to the system. He's also identifying partners to help with commercialization. "There is tremendous interest from policy makers, rangeland managers, tribal entities, and horse advocates who know we need something better than we have. The federal government has spoken; the solution must be scientifically sound and include safe and humane fertility control tools. We've got that and more."

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