

Proposed surgery to sterilize Oregon wild horses raises hackles

By EMILY CURETON
Oregon Public Broadcasting

HINES — Wild horses walk a fine line between icon and unwanted. The Bureau of Land Management is eyeing an Oregon experiment to spay wild mares as a potential model for the West.

Among the many horses, fence panels and mounds of manure at a Bureau of Land Management wild horse corral, a nursing colt ducked between his mother's legs.

The mare swung around him to watch a tractor lift hay bales the size of cars. Like more than 11,000 wild horses last year, she was removed from public rangeland. She gave birth at this BLM corral in Eastern Oregon, and the collar around her neck means it could be her last foal — she'd been tagged to undergo surgical sterilization.

The procedure hasn't been widely performed on wild horses before, but after years of opposition, the BLM hopes to operate on test mares as soon as next month.

The National Academy of Sciences looked at the practice and issued a report in 2013, saying it didn't recommend spay surgery due to risks of infection and the difficulty of providing follow-up care. When the BLM published its plan to move ahead with ovariectomy via colpotomy, ani-



OPB Photo/Emily Cureton

A nursing colt ducks between his mother's legs at a BLM corral in Hines.

mal rights groups sued. Again it triggered a strong reaction, with more than 11,300 public comments pouring into the agency, according to a BLM spokeswoman.

The BLM has long been under pressure to bring down horse herd numbers across 10 Western states without resorting to slaughter. Relatively few of the horses it rounds up are adopted or sold — just a few thousand last year, compared to the 48,000 wild horses kept in corrals or private facilities and leased pastures. The agency spends \$50 million a year to run that hold-

ing system. The horses left on public rangeland share it with millions of privately owned cattle, which are authorized to graze under BLM permits.

"It's a balancing act between multiple uses, in terms of identifying how many horses can this area sustain, without negatively impacting wildlife habitat, recreation and livestock grazing opportunities," BLM wild horse specialist Rob Sharp said.

The BLM claims that wild horse herds double every four years without intervention. Federal law calls the horses

"living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West," but it limits where they can roam to areas identified 50 years ago. Water sources in those areas have run dry before. Sharp said, in Eastern Oregon, the BLM has trucked thousands of gallons a day to keep wild horses from dying or trespassing onto private land in search of water.

"The general public does not stand to see starving and dying horses on the range," Sharp said. "Unfortunately, I think that will be the impetus for major change in this program."

The BLM's wild horse and burro program is eyeing the Oregon spay experiment as a model for the West. Stallions have been castrated before, but Sharp said that's not effective for long-term population control, since one stud can get many mares pregnant.

The spay procedure is increasingly outdated among domestic horse veterinarians, said Dr. Regina Turner, head of the Equine Reproduction & Behavior Service at the University of Pennsylvania. She's not affiliated with the BLM or any advocacy groups commenting on the spay study. She last performed ovariectomy via colpotomy — the kind of procedure the BLM is planning — in the 1990s.

"It can be done humanely, with minimal stress to the mare, if it's done with proper pain control, and done efficiently and quickly by someone who's experienced at the procedure," Turner said. "But, I'll be honest, it would not be my first choice," she added.

The procedure involves a surgeon making an incision and using a chain to crush a mare's ovaries internally by feel, without help from the tiny cameras Turner deploys in her practice. Spaying isn't used as a birth control method for domestic horses, and is more often performed to alter behavior "usually if there is an

animal the owners don't put a lot of value on," Turner said.

At her clinic, several spayed mares are used as "stimulus animals" to collect semen from stallions.

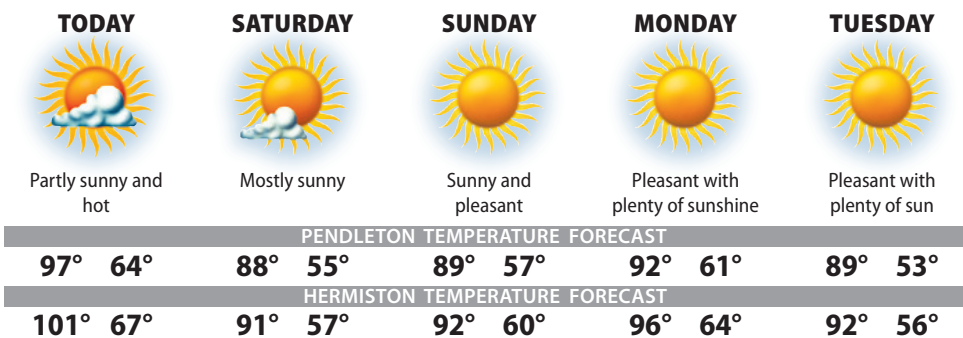
"If you have a mare that has no ovaries, she never has high progesterone, so she's always receptive to the stallion, pretty much 24/7, 365," Turner said.

Mares typically won't breed most of the year. One of the concerns raised by opponents of spaying wild horses is how a major change to their reproductive organs could alter how the horses interact with each other.

"They're not livestock. They're a specially protected species. They're the only other animal protected under federal law besides the bald eagle," said Suzanne Roy of the American Wild Horse Campaign, a group that has sued to block the spay study.

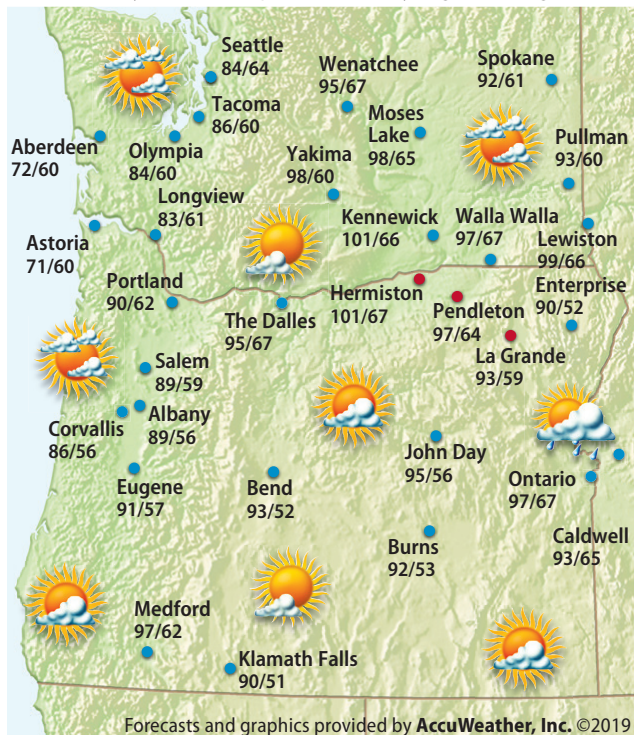
She called the surgery "a completely inappropriate procedure" and "invasive and inhumane," but she agrees the herds need to be managed. Roy supports a birth control vaccine called PZP — a shot that costs more than permanent surgery. It also requires getting close enough to dart mares with annual boosters. Because of that, the BLM has said PZP is not a viable fertility-control option for most wild horse herds.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



ALMANAC

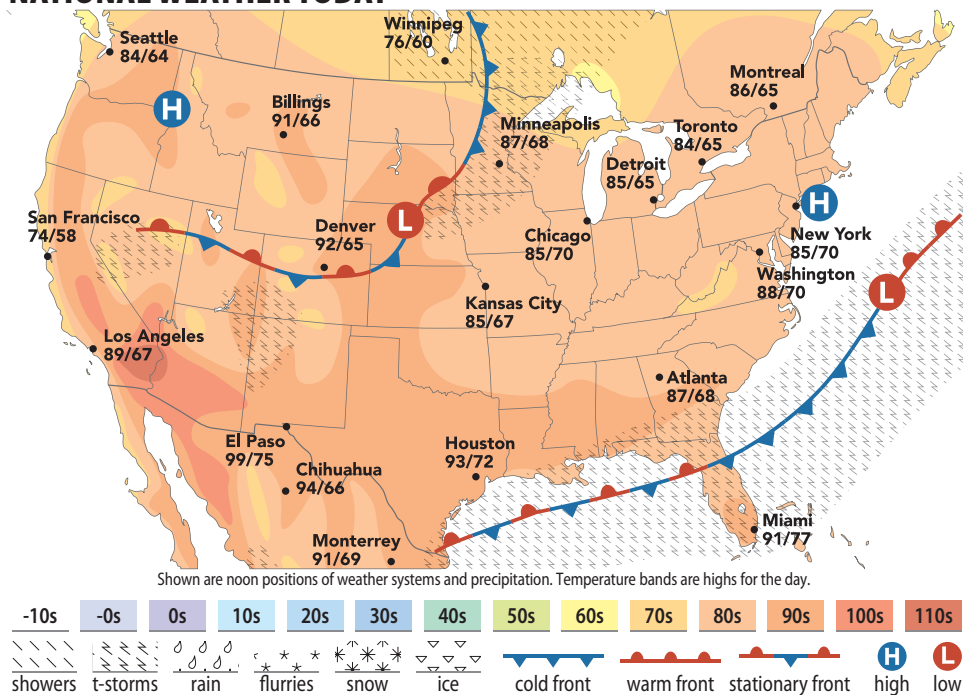
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	92°	49°	
Normals	90°	60°	
Records	114° (1928)	42° (1897)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.04"		
Normal month to date	0.26"		
Year to date	9.61"		
Last year to date	6.49"		
Normal year to date	7.84"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	90°	47°	
Normals	90°	60°	
Records	109° (1928)	45° (1953)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.01"		
Normal month to date	0.18"		
Year to date	4.56"		
Last year to date	5.10"		
Normal year to date	5.88"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	Sat.		
Boardman	WSW 4-8	WSW 10-20	
Pendleton	WNW 6-12	W 8-16	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	5:31 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	8:32 p.m.		
Moonrise today	12:53 a.m.		
Moonset today	3:17 p.m.		
New	First	Full	Last
July 31	Aug 7	Aug 15	Aug 23

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 109° in Needles, Calif. Low 25° in Stanley, Idaho

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Some Oregon Republicans question effort to recall governor

GOP: Recall needed because Brown's policies went against ballot initiatives passed by voters

By GARY WARNER
Bend Bulletin

SALEM — Some prominent Oregon Republicans say their party's effort to recall Gov. Kate Brown isn't a good use of limited energy, time and money.

"I am only speaking for myself, but I have misgivings about the petition drive," said Deschutes County Republican chair Paul deWitt. "Kate Brown deserves to be recalled, but we also need to elect Republicans in 2020."

DeWitt said the county party would circulate petitions for the recall, launched July 15 by Oregon Republican Party chair Bill Currier. "The petition will be on our table at the county fair," deWitt said. "We'll do our part."

But deWitt is among a mostly quiet group of critics within the party who say the recall will undercut efforts to win seats in the Legislature and mount a strong run for three statewide offices on the ballot in 2020.

Most of the critics won't speak on the record out of concern of seeming disloyal to an official state party effort. But some think the stakes are too high to remain quiet.

"We need a strategy, and a recall isn't it," said Julie Parrish, a former Republican state representative from West Linn and longtime political consultant.

Currier said July 15 the recall was needed because

Brown's policies went against ballot initiatives passed by voters. He also said she overstepped her constitutional authority by saying she could use an executive order to institute policy the Legislature had failed to approve.

"The people of Oregon deserve and expect a governor that honors the will of the voters and works for the good of all citizens," Currier said.

Recall proponents have until Oct. 14 to submit just over 280,000 valid signatures to the Oregon Secretary of State's Office in order to force a recall election late this year.

Buoyed by a 2018 election that returned Brown to office and enlarged their majorities in the Legislature, Democrats passed statewide rent control, taxes to support education and health care and driver's licenses for unauthorized immigrants.

Bills on a carbon cap, guns and vaccines were scrapped as the price Brown and Democrats were willing to pay to end two Senate Republican walkouts that blocked hundreds of other bills.

Brown has declined comment on the recall effort. Democratic supporters say voters endorsed her agenda by returning her to the governorship in November.

"First, Republicans held the legislative process hostage; now they want to undo the entire election," said Thomas Wheatley, a longtime Brown political adviser.

Republicans say large rallies at the Capitol this year against the carbon cap, gun control and vaccination bills show a groundswell of disenchantment with Brown's policy positions.

Parrish agrees but says the recall is the wrong way for the

GOP to channel that energy.

"If you ask people in the grassroots to do something, there should be a solid path to success," Parrish said. "I don't see it. Unless they are going to spend a boatload of money, anger in the grassroots isn't going to get you there. You just end up disappointing people."

Rather than recall Brown, GOP critics say the party should focus on electing Republicans to the Legislature, flipping swing districts won by Democrats last year.

A second priority is to try to elect Republicans as secretary of state, treasurer and attorney general — all on the 2020 ballot.

Critics say there are too many ways for the recall effort to turn into a deflating failure.

The GOP recall already finds itself competing with a different Brown recall started by Michael Cross, a political activist from Salem.

"It's confusing," deWitt said. "People will be saying, 'I already signed a recall petition.'"

If Republicans can't reach the signature requirement in time, the GOP will look weak. Forcing a recall election and then having voters retain Brown in office would also look bad.

Even if the Republican recall gets what it wants — a vote to remove Brown — the immediate result would be to replace her with Treasurer Tobias Read, another Democrat. Read would hold the office until a special election in November 2020 to fill the final two years of Brown's term.

"We do all of this and Read is governor — is that so much better?" deWitt said. "From what I see, he supports the same issues as Brown."

CORRECTION: The Umatilla County Fair guide published Wednesday had the incorrect date for the Umatilla County Fair parade. The parade is Saturday, Aug. 3.

The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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