

SHOOTING THE BREEZE

The 7mm-08 Remington

I've got to confess, it's easier to love some cartridges than others. The 7mm cartridges among others have taken some convincing, being as the hearsay around campfires I have frequented over the years were sometimes less than charitable. Still, despite our personal biases, each cartridge in existence, objectively, has both pros and cons. The 7mm-08 Remington is definitely a standout with a lot of dynamite to offer in a small package.



Dale Valade

The .308 Winchester case has, like many others before it, been the parent case to a myriad of wildcats and standardized factory offspring. Not all of the factory cartridges are as popular as they could or should be, but the 7mm-08 is second only to the .243 in popularity among the various .308 progeny. Designed to duplicate the performance of the old 7x57mm Mauser but in a true short action, the 7mm-08 is as they say "all that and a bag of chips."

Although we revere the 7x57mm Mauser, the few selections of contemporary factory ammo are held to lower than potential power levels in deference to the old 1893 Mauser and Remington Rolling Block rifles lingering in the hands of the potentially uninformed. Unlike the maligned .284 WCF, the 7mm-08 is easy to find, both components and a wide variety of available factory ammunition choices. Rifles are compact and lightweight yet don't kick so badly as to send you out from under your favorite sombrero. Practically anyone can master a rifle with these choice features.

These desirable attributes

combined with excellent accuracy and more than sufficient power are what endears it to so many shooters, especially the young or just starting out. Even veteran shooters find it a quality choice for just about anything. Were I to build or buy a rifle whose primary focus was to be as lightweight, compact and yet powerful as could be, the 7mm-08 would be high in the running especially if its primary use was mixed cover, high country deer and elk hunting. The 7mm (.284) has an excellent range of bullet choice for handloading; the most desirable and useful for the deer and elk hunter will run from 140- to 165-grain as these are most balanced in bullet weight to velocity ratios. Medium to slow burning rate powders will result in at least hunting grade accuracy at worst and eye popping clover-leaf groups at best even in lightweight short, skinny barrels.

Last fall my wife Emma took her first cow elk with a single, well placed shot from her 7mm-08 at 200 yards. That was with 140-grain Remington factory ammunition. This year, she decided to bring it along to fill her LOP antlerless deer tag. Armed with 140-grain Sierra Gameking handloads, she did not fail to impress yet again. This is typical performance from a properly loaded and operated 7mm-08 Remington to those that have them. If you're in the market, this may be the next gun you buy that you never knew you needed to have.

Are you a fan of the 7mm-08? Write to us at shootingthebreezebme@gmail.com!

Dale Valade is a local country gent with a love for the outdoors, handloading, hunting and shooting.

Forest Service mulls cutting wild horse numbers in Ochocos

By Michael Kohn
EO Media Group

A herd of feral horses that grazes on land within the Ochoco National Forest could have its numbers slashed if a new management plan for the horses is adopted.

The appropriate management level of horses in the Big Summit Wild Horse herd is 12 to 57 animals, according to a plan released by the Ochoco National Forest. Currently, the herd includes around 135 horses.

The Big Summit herd is unique in the Pacific Northwest as it's the only one in Oregon and Washington to be managed solely by the U.S. Forest Service. The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for most of the wild horse herds in other areas of Oregon.

The herd is located about 30 miles east of Prineville and grazes on 27,000 acres of land located between 4,000 to 7,000 feet in elevation.

A 1975 management plan set the number of horses in the area at around 60. When numbers exceeded that amount, the Forest Service worked with the Bureau of Land Management to transfer horses to a facility near Burns. Funding for that agreement ended in 2013, and since that time, the Forest Service has witnessed a dramatic growth in the herd.

In its updated management plan, the Forest Service says it aims to keep the number of horses at the "high end" of the appropriate management level.

The numbers will be maintained through contraception and sterilization. Contraception includes tools such as PZP, an immun contraceptive vaccine. Other methods to slow population growth will also be considered, but only if approved by the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board or other governing agencies, according to details in the Forest Service plan.

DNA samples will also be collected to ensure that the herd maintains an acceptable level of genetic variability. New mares from similar habitats will be introduced if it's determined that greater genetic variability is required.

Excess horses will be removed by gathering them together and trapping animals. Trapped animals will then be prepared for adoption or sale, according to the management plan.

The Forest Service says it needs to



EO Media Group/Ryan Brennecke

A herd of feral horses graze in the Ochoco National Forest near Prineville in 2018.

reduce the number of animals to protect forest ecology, which is at risk of being overgrazed if the numbers of wild horses remain at current levels. The management plan specifies that riparian areas, where the horses graze in winter, are particularly vulnerable.

In addition to protecting the ecology, it is believed that the larger numbers are not sustainable in winter, when grass is difficult to access through the snow.

In its plan, the Forest Service acknowledged that wild horses have survived harsh winters at population numbers above the proposed management level. However, the report states that riparian areas suffered damage from overgrazing during those periods. It adds that "less than desirable body conditions" were evident on some of the horses that survived the harsh winters.

The Forest Service decision was based on consultations with wildlife agencies, which consider the needs of all species in the area. Based on those discussions, the Forest Service determined that the size of the current herd could threaten other species by depriving them of forage.

The 1975 management plan in current use recommends the herd be maintained at 60 horses, and does not allow numbers to fluctuate based on changes in climate, available forage or resource conditions.

The new proposal states the determination is based on the best available science but adds that the suggested changes have provoked public controversy.

"Although some aspects of wild horse management are socially controversial, there is no evidence to demonstrate a substantial dispute within the science commu-

nity about the effects as described in the Environmental Assessment," the report states.

Gordon Clark, 87, a Jefferson County rancher who supports the Forest Service plan, agrees with scientific claims that too many horses can cause environmental degradation and put other species at risk.

"Would the general public rather see an elk or a deer or a horse in the forest? The horses are the alpha species so they push the elk and the deer out of the area," said Clark. "The horses really overgraze that area; they are bad for the forests."

Clark does have a stake in the decision. For more than two decades he grazed sheep in the Big Summit area with an agreement from the Forest Service but stopped three years ago when the number of wild horses increased. Since 2014 Clark has been advising the Forest Service that the grazing plan was "falling apart."

"The horses use certain areas a lot, especially in the winter, and the horses use random grazing patterns," said Clark. "There is nothing uniform. The horses go to one place one summer then another place another summer. So grazing allotments are gone. They don't work anymore."

Opponents to the plan argue that winter conditions do not pose a threat to the horses. Frank Porfily, a Prineville resident, says he has observed the horses over the past five years and does not believe their increased numbers are a problem.

"I have not observed a lack of forage in the area," said Porfily.

The plan is currently in an objection period during which people who made previous comments can comment again.

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