



Big Bend Ranch Wild Burro Project

Project Scope

Peaceful Valley is working with the State of Texas to replace the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's policy of shooting the wild burros of the Big Bend Ranch State Park (BBRSP) with a capture program. This program, with limited assistance from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), will include the safe capture, quarantine, testing, gentling and adoption of the feral burro population. This project will be administered, staffed and financed by Peaceful Valley's Texas Burro Rescue Division. The exact number of burros within the BBRSP is currently unknown. Early estimates range between 200 and 400. Another unknown factor at this stage of the project is whether or not any burros are traveling over the Rio Grande from Mexico.

Phase I Capture

The burros roam freely over the Eastern and South-Eastern areas of the BBRSP. They travel between the numerous springs on the park as well as to the Rio Grande in the South. Much of the park is made up of mesas and high, rocky landscape. To effectively capture the burros, they will need to be trapped at the lower, Southerly areas along their travel routes. Some factors that effect the burro's route are time of year, weather, vegetation growth and moon phases.

The first Capture Test Site will be constructed in a canyon near an old ranchito near the Rio Grande. To prevent interference and theft, all locations will be kept confidential. This canyon showed the fewest signs of people traveling through the area but held many active burro paths. The capture plans will begin in late February 2008 with the initial baiting of the burros using baled hay. Once the burros are accustomed to eating the hay without molestation, the traps will be set to capture the groups as they travel through the area. In the beginning phases of this project, the traps will be hand sprung. Great care will be taken to keep the burros calm during the entire capture and transport process. This will help to transition the burros into a domestic lifestyle.

Once a group of burros has been captured, it will be transported to a temporary holding facility within the boundary of the BBRSP. These facilities were originally built by cattlemen when the area was a working cattle ranch. These facilities will require some modification in order for the medical staff to safely draw blood samples for testing. Each captured burro must be tested for communicable diseases by the US Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Under our agreement with APHIS, if any burro in a group is tested positive for any disease, the entire group must be quarantined for 60 days before being retested. Any group of burros found to be positive after 60 days will be euthanized. The lab testing must be paid by Peaceful Valley and is approximately \$150 per burro. Fecal samples will also be taken during this phase to determine the parasite load of each group. Once all burros within a capture group have cleared quarantine, they will be transported to Peaceful Valley Texas Burro Rescue's Main Facility in Miles, TX. This will complete the capture phase for each burro group.

Estimated 2008 Costs for Phase I

Baled hay for baiting	\$ 1,500
Holding facility construction	\$ 6,500
Equipment maintenance & repair	\$ 4,500
Trap panels	\$ 7,500
Lab testing 50 burros	\$ 7,500
Misc. travel/staff expenses	\$ 5,000
Total Phase I	\$32,500



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Phase II Medical Treatment

The Medical Phase of the BBRSP Burro Project will commence as each group is brought to the Miles Facility. Upon arrival, each group will be segregated according to sex. As there will be no need for further infectious disease quarantine, different capture groups can be co-mingled as they progress through the medical phase.

Before medical treatment is provided, each burro must be given positive identification so that its progress can be recorded through the medical phase. Each burro is given three forms of identification for use by Peaceful Valley's staff once they enter the system. These include:

1. A 9-digit microchip implanted under the skin on the left side of the neck
2. A PVDR Identification Number
3. A 15 character PVDR Burro Signalment Key

This identification information along with other pertinent information including; birth year, sex, color, castration date, capture location are all recorded in Peaceful Valley Master Donkey List database.

The vaccine process includes two vaccines and is given in an initial dose with a booster given 4 weeks later. Each burro will be given an equine 5-way vaccine that includes influenza and Tetanus. They will also be given a separate West Nile Virus Vaccine. After the initial and booster doses are given the burros are placed on an annual vaccine schedule.

Using the parasite data from the fecal samples gathered during quarantine, a de-worming agent will given to each burro. This will usually begin with a 500 pound dose of an Ivermectrin based wormer. Peaceful Valley de-worms all of the burros in their care every three months, rotating the type of wormer each time to prevent the parasites from building immunities to the products. If it is found that the burros have a higher than average parasite load, the initial dosage will be drastically reduced to prevent a massive die-off of parasites and causing extreme stress to the burro host.

All jack (male) burros will be castrated. Adult jacks pose a special problem as they have large blood vessels feeding the testicles. The typical equine castration method cannot be used as the burros can bleed to death. Peaceful Valley's method of castration includes the ligation, or tying off, of the blood vessels. This extra step has resulted in over 500 castrations without incident. Young jacks are checked regularly and are castrated as soon as they have dropped both testicles.

In order to safely work with the burros during the medical phase, proper facilities will need to be constructed. These facilities will include a Burro Management System, sorting pens and holding areas. In addition, feeding paddocks will also be built so that the growing number of burros on the facility can be managed by minimal personnel. Each burro will remain in the medical phase for approximately three months.

Estimated 2008 Costs for Phase II

Identification for 50 burros	\$ 3,250
Vaccine regiment	\$ 4,000
De-Worming	\$ 2,000
Castration	\$ 3,750
Incidental and Transportation	<u>\$ 8,500</u>
Total Phase II	\$21,500

Peaceful Valley Texas Burro Rescue

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Phase III Gentling Process

In order to place the captured burro in long term homes where they can be cared for by people that are interested in burros, it is imperative that these burros be manageable to the degree that they will allow for contact with people. It is the experience of Peaceful Valley that burro owners that can touch, groom and halter their burros are more likely to provide proper feed, veterinary care and hoof trimming. It is also our experience that many Veterinarians and Farriers will refuse to work on any burro that is not able to stand tied.

A wild burro will have an instinctual avoidance of humans. If handled gently without undue stress and pain, the burro will learn to accept people quickly. While not all burros have the same emotional qualities, most can be made manageable in a relatively short time. The gentling process begins by separating the burros into small 12'x12' pens. A volunteer trainer will begin the process by simply standing in the pen with the burro. This will accustom the burro to the proximity of people. As the burro learns to accept the presence of people, other stimulus will be added including treats thrown to the burro, treats offered by hand, a light touch on the shoulder and so on. Eventually the burro will be moved through the major gentling processes including:

- Allowing touching on the face, neck, back and tail
- Accepting a halter
- Standing Tied
- Raising of all four hooves

The majority of the gentling will be done by Peaceful Valley volunteers under the direction of a Certified Peaceful Valley Trainer. Prior to becoming a volunteer trainer, each person must complete the Peaceful Valley Gentling Certification Seminar. This ensures the uniformity of methods as well as protecting the safety of the volunteers and burros.

The gentling process can be expected to take anywhere from 6 months to 2 years depending on various factors. Some of these factors include:

- Previous treatment of the burros in the wild
- Predisposition to nervousness
- Age at time of capture
- Foal at side of jennet

Estimated 2008 Costs for Phase III

Volunteer training/certification	\$ 3,500
Feed during training phase	<u>\$ 9,500</u>
Total Phase III	\$13,000



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Phase IV Adoption

It is the ultimate goal of this project to place all captured burros into private homes. These homes will be pre-screened to ensure that it will be a suitable match between the burro and the new owners. The process for adopting a burro from Peaceful Valley includes:

Adoption Application: All applicants must fill out an Adoption Application and provide information on themselves as well as their facilities. The application also lists all of the requirements and expectations of Peaceful Valley's Adoption Program.

Home Check: A Peaceful Valley Adoption Specialist will conduct a home check to ensure that all facilities are in compliance with the adoption guidelines. If pictures of the facilities are provided during the screening process, the home check will be conducted when burros are delivered.

Burro Delivery: Typically all burros are delivered by Peaceful Valley staff or adoption specialists. This will ensure the safe loading and transport of the burros.

Recovery: All burros remain the property of Peaceful Valley. If the burro becomes too sick for the adoptive family to care for, the burro is returned to Peaceful Valley for treatment. No Peaceful Valley burro can be sold, given or transferred to another party without the express written consent of Peaceful Valley.

Breeding: No Peaceful Valley burro may be used for breeding for any reason.

Satellite Adoption Centers: Peaceful Valley will continue to add SAC locations throughout the state and surrounding areas where there is an interest in burro adoption. These facilities are volunteer operated and usually house up to 6 burros. These facilities can also act as burro gentling facilities.

Adoption Fee: Peaceful Valley's current adoption fee is \$250 per burro. This is exactly twice the fee that the BLM charges for the adoption of their wild burros. The main difference between the two programs is that Peaceful Valley's burros are gentled and manageable.

Farrier Care: As many farriers will not work on burros, gentled or not, and it is necessary for Peaceful Valley to send our hoof trimmers to our adopted burros. These adopters will be charged a fee to off-set the cost involved.

Estimated 2008 Costs for Phase IV:

Set up and training of SAC facilities	\$ 5,000
Delivery costs of burros	\$ 5,000
Advertising/Marketing	<u>\$ 5,000</u>
Total Phase IV	\$15,000