



Progress and meeting highlights

Feral Horse Advisory Committee



Meeting one: March 30, 2021

Purpose and goals of re-establishing the Feral Horse Advisory Committee

Alberta's government has re-established the Feral Horse Advisory Committee to discuss tools, options and possible next steps that balance the interest many Albertans have in these horses with the need for a feral horse management framework. This includes committee discussions about tools and options that balance the value many Albertans place on seeing horses on the landscape with matters like public safety, protecting wildlife habitat, supporting local industry and ensuring sustainable use of public lands. The committee will provide expert advice to improve feral horse management in Alberta, working toward the development of a future feral horse management strategy.

Alberta's government is also improving past approaches to feral horse management by incorporating new knowledge and the best science available on feral horses. In addition to working with the committee, government is working with the Office of the Chief Scientist and top Canadian feral horse researchers from the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary to develop a better feral horse management plan.

Membership

The committee includes stakeholders, subject matter experts and key organizations with valuable insight into Alberta's feral horse population:

- Alberta Conservation Association
- Alberta Fish and Game Association
- Alberta Professional Outfitters Association
- Alberta Wilderness Association
- Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada
- Helmer Creek Ranch
- Help Alberta Wildies Society
- Livestock Identification Services
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Rocky Mountain Forest Range Association
- Spray Lakes Sawmills
- Stoney Nakoda First Nation
- University of Alberta
- Wild Horses of Alberta Society

Committee deliverables

- Updated feral horse management government website, available at <https://www.alberta.ca/feral-horse-management.aspx>. Updates began in March 2021, and will continue throughout spring and summer 2021 to ensure public resources include the latest information and best science available on feral horses.
- Feral horse management framework targeted for fall 2021/winter 2022. This framework will be informed by committee meetings that take place monthly from April to September 2021.

Meeting two: April 21, 2021

Terms of Reference

The committee has reviewed and finalized a Terms of Reference document that outlines the committee's purpose, goals and conduct. This can be found here: <https://www.alberta.ca/feral-horse-advisory-committee.aspx>

Current population and survey methodology overview

- Government of Alberta staff presented on the 2021 minimum count flight paths, observations and historic age class data.
- The department provided an overview of the survey methodology and how the counts are determined.

Future feral horse management framework

Committee discussions specific to a future management framework will commence in summer 2021.

Strategic Relations Incorporated report

In April 2013, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development undertook a review of Alberta's strategy for managing feral horse populations subject to the Horse Capture Regulation under the Stray Animals Act. Strategic Relations Inc. facilitated stakeholder discussions and released a public report following consultations.

Members are encouraged to review the report, which can be found here: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/4aae3c50-d16d-4b61-a51a-5c02a149b47e/resource/d4bb694c-9567-4b86-bd61-33f2a84309b9/download/2013-feralhorses-managingpopulations-2013.pdf>

Other items

- The Office of the Chief Scientist has done an extensive literature review of feral horse research. Committee members are encouraged to share other scientific resources they are aware of. The need to incorporate other knowledge sources was identified and will be addressed.

Meeting three: May 11, 2021

Continuation of science and knowledge sharing

- Presentation by Brett Boukall (Bow-Crow District Senior Wildlife Biologist, Fish and Wildlife) to give an overview of native ungulate survey methods and population trends.
- Presentation by Dr. Philip McLoughlin (University of Saskatchewan) on feral horse population dynamics, food web interactions, habitat use and newly funded research occurring in the Sundre Equine Management Zone.
- Presentation by Dr. Jocelyn Poissant (University of Calgary) on feral horse genetics research.
- Presentation by Dr. Anne Hubbs (Senior Wildlife Biologist, Fish and Wildlife) to demonstrate applications of the ALCES model (www.alces.ca) in a multi-use landscape and how it can inform landscape management.

Future feral horse management framework

Committee discussions specific to a future management framework will commence in June.

First Nations consultation

The committee member from the Stoney Nakoda First Nation will be sharing traditional knowledge during a presentation at the next meeting. As part of reconciliation efforts, planning is underway to perform a pipe ceremony with attendees from the Stoney Nation and government staff.

Other items

- The committee has identified fall 2021 as a target for a draft feral horse management framework for committee review and consideration.