



Piceance East-Douglas Herd Management Area Rangeland Monitoring Program



The Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area (PEDHMA) is in northwest Colorado, southwest of Meeker and east of State Highway 139. It consists of 190,130 acres.

Appropriate Management Level (AML): 135-235

2022 PEDHMA Population: ~1,272 (6 times AML).
This includes the 140 horses located outside the PEDHMA.

2022 Gather Report: 867 horses gathered, 771 horses removed, 41 stallions and 55 mares were released.

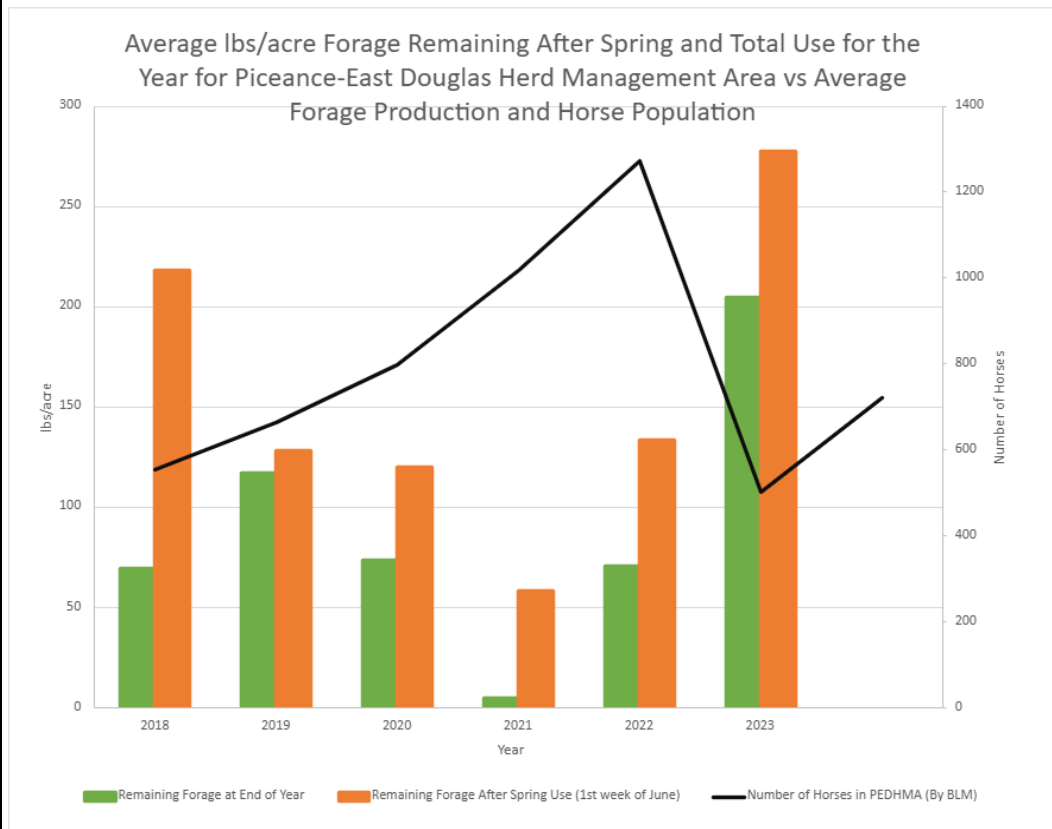
Summer 2024 PEDHMA Population: ~726 including 217 horses located outside the PEDHMA.

Multiple Uses: Wildlife, Wild Horses, Cattle Grazing, Energy, Endangered Plants, Recreation



An intense range monitoring program was initiated in 2018 to determine forage consumption/utilization. Forage utilization data has been collected on 14 sites for six growing seasons to determine which ungulates are utilizing the forage at what times of the year and to what extent. The below graph uses data collected before and after the 2022 gather and captures the significant decline in available vegetation during years with excessive number of horses grazing year-round.

Residual Forage Graph Summary

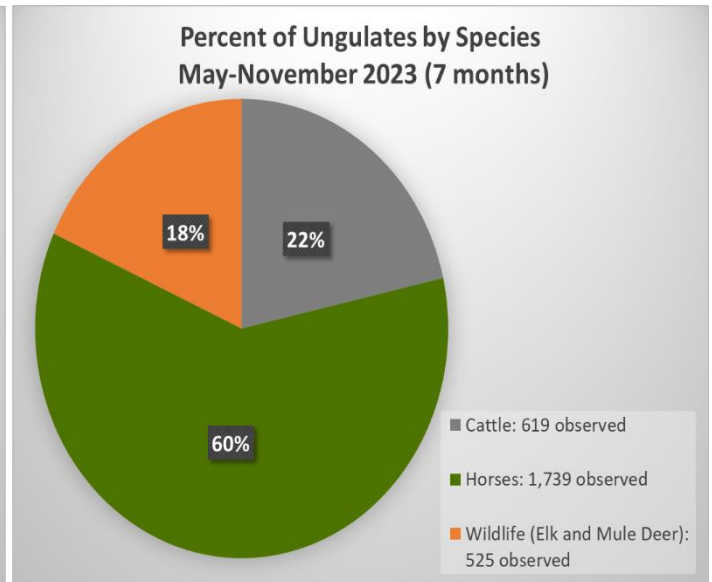
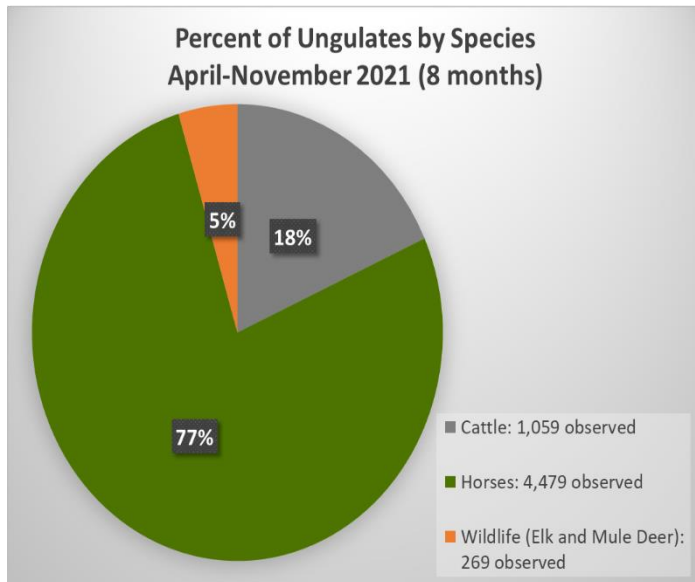


For the first four growing seasons (2018-2021) on-the-ground data collection indicates severe decline in overall (spring and late fall) forage availability. The area received increased moisture in 2022 from recent years, giving vegetation a boost and the gather took place in mid-July.

Based on the March 2021 census of horses in the PEDHMA and utilizing the well documented 20% annual population increase; the black line represents the number of horses across the years. The drop in 2023 is due to the gather.

The 2024 forage data will be analyzed by spring of 2025.

Observations within the PEDHMA based on data pre and post gather.



The above pie charts represent the percentage by species of all animals observed by the 360-degree cameras in 2021 (before the wild horse gather) and 2023 (after the wild horse gather).

2023 Season Observations:

- No further declines in Range Health were observed
- LAM and clipping data reported less overuse early in the growing season (during the plant's critical growth stage).
- More available vegetation in some areas
- Observed minor improvements in landscape composition in certain areas

It will take years for the Range Health to recover, some areas longer than others, continuing active management of all grazing species will help the PEDHMA recover quicker, if not it will be very easy to slip backwards and further the downward trend of Range Health.



Photo taken 4/20/2022 shows heavy use already on vegetation not excluded from grazing by the cage.



Photo taken 9/9/2022 shows heavy use outside the cage. Vegetation inside represents season growth.



Photo taken 7/9/2021 the younger green vegetation is all Russian thistle and other unpalatable weeds. Trace amounts of grass grew in this area during 2021.