



## Diamond Hills North Herd Management Area Eureka, Nevada



### **Location/Habitat**

The Diamond Mountains wild horse herd population is comprised of wild horses from three herd management areas (HMAs): Diamond Hills North (Elko District), Diamond Hills South (Ely District), and the Diamonds (Battle Mountain District). The HMA is generally located along the Diamond Mountain Range approximately 3 miles east of Eureka, Nevada, and extends approximately 48 miles to the north. The HMAs consist of a relatively narrow band of allotments extending along the mountain range and in the Diamond Hills area to the north. The terrain within the area varies from level valleys to high mountains, with elevations ranging from 5,700 feet in elevation to over 10,000 feet, respectively. Climate is characterized by warm, dry summers and cool, wet winters. Precipitation ranges from 8 inches in the valleys to 16 inches in the mountains. Average precipitation is approximately 7 inches on the valley bottoms and 16 to 18 inches on the mountain peaks. Most of the rainfall occurs during the winter months when the plants are dormant. This creates the cold-temperate desert of which the Diamond Hills HMA is a part. Temperatures can be extreme. They range from a high of near 100 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer months to a low of 15 degrees below zero in the winter.

The Diamond Mountain Complex encompasses approximately 302,852 acres of public land in three counties: Eureka, Elko and White Pine. The northern end of the area is approximately 40 miles south of Elko, Nevada. The southern end of the area is adjacent to the town of Eureka, Nevada. The core of the HMAs is the Diamond Mountain Range where most of the wild horses spend the summer. The HMAs extend out from the mountains north and east into the Diamond Hills and Huntington Valley, and west into Diamond Valley. Elevation ranges from approximately 5,800 feet in elevation in the valley bottoms to approximately 10,600 feet on Diamond Peak.

### **Vegetation**

The major vegetation type of the lowlands is big sagebrush with an understory of Sandberg bluegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, and Indian ricegrass. At mid-elevation, the vegetation type is primarily pinyon-juniper, big sagebrush, low sage, and an understory of bottlebrush squirreltail, Thurber needlegrass, and Nevada bluegrass. The higher elevations support pinyon-juniper, mountain-mahogany, big sagebrush, and low sage communities with understories similar to those found at mid-elevations.

### **Herd Description**

Horses gathered from the area exhibit many different colors. Among the most common are chestnut, bay, sorrel, red roan, palomino, buckskin and white. The horses are unusually large with the average height being 14 to 16 hands with an average weight of approximately 1,000 pounds for the stallions and 800 to 900 pounds for the mares.

The majority of wild horses are descendants of domestic ranch, farm and homestead stock. There were several ranches in the Diamond Hills area that had domestic horse permits at the time the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act was passed (P.L. 92-195, December 1971). When the Act was passed, the BLM could no longer authorize grazing by domestic horses within wild horse herd areas. All permittees were given a certain time period to gather their branded and claimed horses. Any horses remaining on the public lands at the end of this claiming period were declared wild. The horses in the Diamond Hills HMA are probably a mix of several common breeds. One rancher in the area bred and raised American Saddlebred and many of the horses caught in the Diamond Complex exhibit the characteristics of this breed.