

INQUIRY INTO THE PROPOSED AERIAL SHOOTING OF BRUMBIES IN
KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK

Animal Welfare Committee

Answers to Supplementary Questions

Hearing: 18 December 2023

Questions from the Animal Welfare Committee

1. **When do you plan to run the next aerial horse killing program? Will there be further shooting at all during foaling seasons?**

Answer 1:

Aerial shooting operations are currently planned for southern Kosciuszko (March) and northern Kosciuszko (April – June).

Rigorous protocols, including notifications, are in place to ensure public safety during aerial shooting operations.

The planned aerial shooting operations in the first half of 2024 (March – June) are outside the major foaling season.

Other approved control operations – including passive trapping and rehoming and ground shooting – are ongoing.

2. **Can you confirm that there will be no horses left alive with bullet wounds in them during the next aerial killing program? If not, why not – why can't this be guaranteed?**

Answer 2:

A preliminary program in November 2023 involving the aerial shooting of 270 horses was evaluated by independent vets and observed by the RSPCA NSW. This was followed by aerial shooting operations in December 2023, which involved the shooting of 532 horses. There were no adverse welfare events – i.e, no non-fatal wounding of horses. The objective of every aerial shooting program for horses in KNP is to deliver the highest welfare outcomes including no non-fatal woundings.

3. **When the aerial killing program commences on a larger scale, will the NSW Government continue to rehome brumbies? Or is the intention for rehoming to cease, and just focus on aerial killing?**

Answer 3:

Wild horses from Kosciuszko National Park will continue to be available for rehoming.

3. **What financial support is the NSW Government currently receiving from the Federal Government to implement the Wild Horse Management Plan (noting that at the Federal Inquiry into the 'Impacts and management of feral horses in the Australian Alps', Mr Atticus Fleming stated ““We thank the Australian**

government for their support, they've provided financial support to help us implement the plan")? Can you please advise how much funding NSW has received from the Federal Government in the past 3 years for brumby programs?

Answer 4:

In 2022, the Australian Government provided \$1.1 million towards wild horse control in the park as part of investment in bushfire recovery.

In 2023, the Australian Government provided an additional \$200,000 towards wild horse control in the park.

- 5. You note in your submission "A trial of reproductive control options will commence when the overall population is reduced to 3,000 wild horses". Can you explain why we wouldn't look to start trials on these options now?**
- a. Even if the Government does not want to implement reproductive control at this stage, a trial will take time – potentially several years depending on the size and scope and which method is used. Won't leaving that to when we reach 3000 horses just further limit the ability to utilise fertility control?**
 - b. Has the Department done any work to look into the oocyte growth factors being trialled on wild horses in the United States? Have you met with the researchers and sought their advice?**

Answer 5:

Reproductive control is not viable for the wild horse population in its current numbers and distribution in Kosciuszko National Park. The current population is too large and too dispersed over a remote and complex landscape.

- a. NPWS will commence a trial of reproductive control technologies in Kosciuszko National Park, once the overall population is reduced to 3000. Field application of a trial is not currently viable given the size of the horse population in Kosciuszko National Park and its dispersal over such a large, complex landscape.
- b. In 2020 NPWS met with USA researchers working on the oocyte growth factor hormone treatment. Initial research on the hormone treatment has been undertaken in the United States and an additional three-year trial on captive-held horses commenced in 2023.

<https://www.blm.gov/press-release/blm-offers-two-wild-horse-fertility-control-trials>

NPWS will continue to monitor any emerging scientific research, including any future outcomes of reproductive control trials in the United States.

6. Can you confirm the untitled map relates to data of study areas for endangered species in KNP given to the Government circa. 2021?

Answer 6:

No.

The map appears to identify a series of AIS (Assets of Intergenerational Significance) sites in Kosciuszko National Park. The location of AIS sites across NSW are published here noting that the location of some sites are not published if sensitive (eg, Wollemi Pine). Further information on AIS sites is contained here: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-management/assets-of-intergenerational-significance .

Other relevant maps and information include:

- Interactive AIS map at: <https://ais-map-dot-npws-ais-portal.ts.r.appspot.com/map>
- Wild horse management areas: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Animals-and-plants/Pests-and-weeds/Kosciuszko-wild-horses/kosciuszko-national-park-wild-horse-heritage-management-plan-230343.pdf
- Threatened biodiversity profile search: <https://threatenedspecies.bionet.nsw.gov.au/>

7. Can you detail any other confirmed locations where endangered species are found in KNP?

Answer 7:

The NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) website provides information on the conservation status and indicative distribution of threatened species (<https://threatenedspecies.bionet.nsw.gov.au/>). The maps provided with these profiles show where species are known or predicted to occur.

8. It would appear the current and planned future culling operations do not correspond with the previously identified endangered species habitat. Given their protection was the Minister's stated aim, shouldn't the culling of Brumbies only occur in known habitat of these endangered species?

Answer 8:

Wild horse control will occur in accordance with the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018 including implementation of the Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan. The Plan requires all horses to be removed from wild horse removal areas. Wild horse prevention areas do not currently contain wild horses and will be maintained at a population of zero wild horses. The

population of horses in wild horse retention areas is to be reduced to 3,000 horses by June 2027.