

**Submission  
No 14**

## **INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED AERIAL SHOOTING OF BRUMBIES IN KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK**

**Organisation:** Equine Voice Australia (EVA)

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Equine Voice Australia is a group with over 10,000 members who have an interest in the welfare of all Australian Equines. For more than seven years, we have been following the Brumby issues and the news that aerial culling is now being pushed is completely abhorrent. The action against the Kosciusko Brumbies must stop immediately for four reasons. It is UNNECESSARY, EXPENSIVE, ENVIRONMENTALLY DESTRUCTIVE and INHUMANE. I will cover these points below.

The Wild Horse Management Plan states that there must be no less than 3000 horses remaining in KNP to sustain a manageable population of horses for their Heritage value. Two scientific research reports by Joanne Canning and Clare Galea have in last month been presented to Parliament, Penny Sharpe is now aware of these reports that prove unquestionably that the numbers are biologically IMPOSSIBLE and that they have been inflated to between 16,000 and 22,000 horses. The new data puts these numbers at less than 3,000 and recent organised headcounts estimate the figures to be as low as 2,000. It's clear that the new data cannot be disputed and the promise of a recount in October confirms it, however, we are shocked and disturbed that armed with this information, the current government are still removing horses from the park at an alarming rate. For all of these reasons we say that the current action is UNNECESSARY.

It goes without saying that the cost of removing the horses, especially by aerial culling will not be cheap. The reaction of the public who will be paying for this very unpopular decision will be negative. The realisation that public money has been spent on slaughtering the iconic horses will raise a lot of questions about why an EXPENSIVE and UNNECESSARY cull should have been ordered.

Much has been said about the damage that horses do to the environment. Much of this has also been disproven. What is not discussed is the good that the horses do. The horses reduce the fire load and prevent the devastating wildfires that wipe out entire species. As in previous culls corpses are left to rot, leaching toxins into the water table and becoming a source of food for wild dogs, cats, foxes and pigs. This UNNECESSARY, EXPENSIVE cull is also ENVIROMENTALLY DESTRUCTIVE.

Horses are intelligent, they are sentient and form very strong bonds, they mourn intensely when one of their herd dies. They are also prey animals and will take off at a gallop if a threat is perceived. Vets will tell you how difficult it is to kill a horse humanely, there is a very tiny spot between the ears and eyes that must be accurately hit for an instant death. Horses at abattoirs are killed with a bolt or a shot from a rifle to this tiny area. Even with the horse in a restrained area, the slaughter man will very often miss the spot on a horse that is panicking and trying to escape. Often it takes two or three shots before a horse is killed. The Standard Operating Procedures that are written on the Pestsmart website were developed in accordance with the RSPCA Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. The SOP's state clearly that the shooter must be absolutely sure of a single lethal shot before dispatching the weapon. If the target is not clear, the shooter must not fire. Shooting horses, according to the SOPs, that are panicked, galloping at full speed from a helicopter on a moving platform at an angle that makes the seeing the required target, is not possible. Images from culls throughout Australia including Guy Fawkes, Lake Gregory and recently in KNP confirms this point. It is shocking to see the multitude of bullets that were needed to kill these horses. Clear headshot wounds where no other bullet wounds are found are very few. The public outcry from the Guy Fawkes cull resulted in the NSW government saying that it should never happen again, yet it appears memories are short and the bloodbath is again on the table. It is depressing and terrible to imagine the pain and fear that these peaceful gentle animals suffered. These animals, included mares and foals which also goes against the SOPs for culling wild horses. Shooting horses cannot be done in accordance with the POCTA and Pestsmart SOPs. Therefore it is INHUMANE and must not be allowed to continue.

Equine Voice Australia does not support ANY culling and requests that all removals are immediately stopped and a new headcount using agreed methodology and overseen by Brumby supporters and experts is carried out with the results reviewed and studied by both sides.

We completely oppose the UNNECESSARY, EXPENSIVE, ENVIRONMENTALLY Destructive AND INHUMANE CULL.