

**Submission
No 49**

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

Name: Ms Jenny Brown
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Submission to the Inquiry into the proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park.

I am strongly opposed to the use of aerial shooting of wild horses due to my concerns regarding:

- (a) the methodology used to survey and estimate the brumby population in Kosciuszko National Park
- (e) the animal welfare concerns associated with aerial shooting
- (h) the availability of alternatives to aerial shooting.

I understand that there is some dispute over the actual numbers of wild horses present in national parks and their environmental impact compared to the impact of wild pigs, cats, rabbits and other introduced species, plus humans using motor bikes and four-wheel drive vehicles. Perhaps greater attention needs to be paid to the impact of all species, humans included, on the vegetation and native species in national parks before using aerial shooting to kill wild horses. A recent study, "Use of density-impact functions to inform and improve environmental out-comes of feral horse management" (Berman et al. 2023), published by Wildlife Biology, disputes many of the negative claims about the environmental impacts of Alpine horses and how best to help native species. This research suggests that to better manage wild horses in the environment it is important to understand the relationship between horse density and the percentage of environmental impact attributed to horses; and that culling programs need only to manage horse populations to the threshold limit in order to have environmentally positive outcomes.

An "Assessment of animal welfare for helicopter shooting of feral horses" (J. Hampton, G. Edwards, +6 authors T. Collins) published in 2017 which examined the welfare outcomes of three helicopter shooting programs in central Australia during 2013 and 2015 found that at least 1% of horses were non-fatally wounded, IDR was 63% (60–66%), and 3% (2–5%) of horses were not shot in the cranium, neck or thorax. Horses are flight animals. As a prey animal, the horse depends on flight as its primary means of survival. When faced with danger or perceived danger, like shooters in a helicopter, horses will run away, meaning that shooters are generally trying to aim at a moving target making achieving a 100% instantaneous death rate (IDR) difficult even for very experienced shooters. The type of vegetation cover and terrain can also make it difficult for shooters to achieve the instant death of a horse with one shot. There is simply too great a risk that horses will be wounded and escape only die slow painful deaths for aerial shooting to be considered as being a humane method of reducing wild horse numbers.

Aerial shooting of wild horses should not be used as a means of reducing horse numbers in national parks when there are more humane options available including fertility control and passive trapping of horses for rehoming, relocation to more suitable locations, or slaughter close to point of capture.

Fertility Control has a potential to add a humane and non-lethal control strategy to the management of wild horse populations and has been used for over 20 years in the United States in the form of an annual vaccine called Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP). Several methods of control are now in various states of research and development and fertility control should be part of any management strategy adopted for use in national parks.

Trucking captured horses long distances to abattoirs or knackeries for slaughter cannot be made humane due to the time horses need to spend in yards and on trucks, where they can be deprived of food and water for long periods. If horses captured using passive trapping methods are deemed unsuitable for rehoming or relocation they should be humanely killed at or near the point of capture.

The wild horses of Australia, like so many animals now viewed as pests, were brought here by humans for their use and later abandoned to fend for themselves. Our wild horses have the same capacity to feel pain and fear as our native animals, and their lives deserve the same level of dignity and respect. Any management strategies adopted to reduce or remove wild horse populations from our national parks need to be designed to protect both the native animals and vegetation that are viewed as being at risk and the horses. Many of these horses are the descendants of the walers who served with the Australian Light Horse Regiments and have the potential to make excellent riding horses, if able to be rehomed. These magnificent animals deserve to be treated with the same dignity and respect as our precious native wildlife.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission

Yours sincerely

Jenny Brown