Submission No 90

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED AERIAL SHOOTING OF BRUMBIES IN KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK

Name: Ms Jennifer O'Shea

Date Received: 11 October 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express my profound concern and strong disagreement with the proposed aerial culling of wild brumbies in Mount Kosciuszko National Park, New South Wales, and Victoria, Australia. I firmly believe that such a method of population control is not only inhumane but also fundamentally flawed in its execution.

Inhumane and Cruelty Concerns: The aerial culling of wild brumbies is a practice that raises significant ethical and welfare concerns. It is well-documented that this method often results in prolonged and painful deaths for the animals, which goes against the principles of humane treatment of animals. Regardless of the shooter's skill, there is no guarantee that all horses will be humanely euthanized with a single gunshot, as required by standard operating procedures (SOPs). Many horses are left to suffer in a cruel and inhumane way.

Flawed Population Counts: The accuracy of wild brumby population counts is essential for informed decision-making. I am aware of the work of equine scientist Joanne Cannining and biostatistician Claire Galea, which suggests that the current population counts are flawed. It is imperative that a new population count is conducted using reliable and unbiased methods to obtain a fair and just count. Relying on computer-based programs may not provide an accurate representation of the actual numbers, especially considering the significant number of brumbies lost during the 2020 bushfires, which have not been taken into account.

Inapplicability of Research: I refer to the report "Assessment of animal welfare for helicopter shooting of feral horses" by Jordan O Hampton et al. While this research has raised questions about the effectiveness of shooting horses from a helicopter, it is essential to note that the research was conducted in Central Australia, which has a vastly different landscape and environment from the treed canopies and mountainous terrain where brumbies inhabit in Victoria and New South Wales. Therefore, the findings may not be directly applicable to the situation in these regions.

Failure to Satisfy Standard Operating Procedures: The report on aerial shooting suggests that this method fails to meet standard operating procedures. Aerial shooting is influenced by various factors, including shooter skill, fatigue, and helicopter pilot capacity on the day of shooting. SOPs do not support ground shooting of free-roaming horses when a clear view of a single horse cannot be achieved to ensure a clean headshot, which is the preferred method for humane euthanasia.

Resultant Chaos and Suffering: Shooting a mob of roaming brumbies can lead to chaos and suffering among the horses. The startle of a horse falling can cause others to run in fear, resulting in further injury and a chaotic, distressing situation. The difficulty of taking headshots in such circumstances has led to horses being found with gut shots, shots to the neck, and back, all of which result in prolonged suffering.

Opposition to Trapping and Shooting: I also wish to express my strong opposition to the practice of shooting brumbies in traps. This method is inherently cruel, unnecessary, and inhumane. There are more compassionate alternatives for managing wild horse populations.

In light of these concerns, I urge you to reconsider the proposed aerial culling of wild brumbies and to explore more humane and effective methods of population control. Furthermore, I request that a new and accurate population count be conducted to inform future management decisions.

I am deeply committed to the welfare and conservation of these iconic animals and believe that we can find a better way to coexist with them while preserving the unique ecosystems of Mount Kosciuszko National Park.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I hope that my concerns will be taken into account during the decision-making process.

Sincerely,

Jennifer O'Shea