

**Submission  
No 92**

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

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Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

This submission will be brief as my available time has been compromised of late by my work as a volunteer fire fighter.

For much of my working life I have worked in Kosciuszko National Park in roles including senior ranger, district manager and regional manager. I retired in 2013.

a) Survey Methodology

I have been involved in interpreting the results of various counting methodologies over a period of around 25 years. From my experience the results of all population assessments has been done at the highest standards using peer reviewed science. The surveys have given very clear trend data and in most cases it is very clear the population of horses has been shown to be increasing despite various population management programs. However numbers are important but so are impacts and over this 25 year period it is very evident that the impacts of horses have been growing.

b). Justification of aerial shooting

Aerial shooting is widely used as a population control method for a range of feral animals across Australia including horses, pigs, goats, deer and other vertebrate pests. The shooters and pilots are highly trained and accurate. NSW has a very well developed aerial shooting accreditation program know as FAAST. If the feral horse population is ever going to be effectively and efficiently managed in NSW , aerial shooting is going to be essential. There are just too many steep rugged areas with limited access for any program other than aerial shooting to be successful.

c). Threats to endangered species

The science is very clear. Horses destroy natural habitats. I first started working in Kosciuszko NP in 1977. There were very few horses then. As the horse population gradually grew I observed the slow but steady destruction of snow grass tussock areas, trampling of wetlands and crushing and slumping of stream banks. As an example Broad Toothed Rats and Northern Corroboree Frogs used to be widespread but sadly no longer.

d). History of control

For over 25 years there has been many attempts to manage horse numbers in Kosciuszko NP. Passive trapping has been the primary control technique. While the technique has been partially successful in some areas where terrain is gentle and access easy, it has not been effective in the more rugged areas or impractical to attempt it. Roping or brumby running was used over 20 years ago however it was really more of a sporting activity rather than a targeted control program. There were some negative animal welfare outcomes associated with this activity and from an animal welfare perspective it would not be appropriate today. It is well known that graziers shot many horses as a population control technique as the presence of horses comprised the management of summer domestic stock grazing on snow leases. One thing is very clear, despite the use of various population control techniques, the feral horse population has continued to grow and it will grow to massive numbers if more effective programs such as aerial shooting are not implemented.

e). Animal welfare concerns

Aerial shooting if carried out using FAAST trained personnel has been proven to be very efficient in managing numbers while adhering to the highest animal welfare outcomes. The technique has been used in Kosciuszko NP for over 20 years to control pigs and goats and more recently deer. Without this technique the Park would have huge populations of goats and pigs as in most cases where these feral animals are found it would be impossible to implement ground based control programs.

f). Human safety concerns

NPWS operates under the highest possible safety standards. It has well developed procedures and protocols. Staff know where and when some areas may need to be closed but given the huge size of the Park it is impractical and unnecessary to close off every area where aerial shooting may take place.

g). Implementation of previous aerial shooting programs

As mentioned previously aerial shooting is now an acceptable and very effective feral animal control technique. There has been lots of misinformation about the effectiveness of the technique and in most cases this has been by people with no knowledge of how aerial shooting operations are conducted.

h). Alternatives to aerial shooting

The reality is no control techniques other than aerial shooting will be successful in significantly lowering the horse population in Kosciuszko NP. In terms of animal welfare outcomes it is much more sensible to have a quick reduction in the population of horses otherwise the number of animals needing to be trapped , removed or shot each year will be ongoing at a very high number. Let's not kid ourselves that the often proposed fertility control measure could be a solution. The park is huge , the horse population is huge and fertility control really is a technique for farmed animals .

We should not tolerate a situation where Kosciuszko NP is managed as a feral animal breeding ground requiring huge resources to implement sometimes ineffective feral animal control programs.