

**Submission
No 103**

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

Name: Astara Rose
Date Received: 12 October 2023

The biggest ecological threat to our pristine native environments and its flora and fauna, is, and always has been, human beings. Colonial white settlers waged an aggressive assault on Australian habitats without any concern whatsoever of the ecological impact of their inappropriate farming practices, land clearing, hunting and other invasive practices. No doubt they did what they felt they had to do to survive. And this is exactly what animals do when they are abandoned by the cruelty and indifference of human beings and they have to survive in a wild environment. But then we label them as “feral.” When they breed it is a problem, and when there is a problem with numbers we cull them. We do not cull our own species, but we feel we have the right to cull anything else that threatens our ideas and constructs of what constitutes a pristine Alpine environment, a tourist destination that is profitable, or a conservation programme that is in fashion which favours “native” species. Embedded in these favourite modern constructs are layers of hypocrisy, glaring falsehoods and a good dose of fake science. Iconic native mammals like the kangaroo are slaughtered by the thousands. Another native icon, the koala, is rendered vulnerable by ongoing habitat loss due to the relentless logging of native forests. Yet another Australian native animal, the dingo, is persecuted, subjected to horrendous deaths through poisons and traps that are banned in other civilised countries. Wedge tail eagles are still strung up on fence lines by misguided farmers in the north of this country, despite it being a native species. Wombats are quietly eliminated by farmers, though a protected species, when they are deemed a nuisance to their cattle. Protection of our native wildlife is a joke when you really start looking at what farmers, miners, industry, businesses, real estate and housing enterprises have undertaken in their self interest without any consideration of wildlife, flora or fauna. Nor has science served these native species well to understand their needs, habits, breeding cycles yet alone the behavioural adaptations forced upon them by human intrusions into their homes.

This is also the case in the life of the Australian brumby, another of our iconic animals. Very little is known about their real numbers, their habitat movements, breeding cycles and their interaction with other species in their environment. The focus has solely been on a highly exaggerated estimate of their number, a form of science I regard as fake science which is little more than guess work done on someone’s computer. The only way of knowing the true number of brumbies in our Alpine regions would be for a team of wilderness savvy individuals to roam the brumbies’ almost inaccessible habitats for two or three years, to come up with statistics that are closer to reality. Such meagre studies as do exist, fail to take into account cyclic events such as bushfires, drought and other weather phenomenon that impact on brumby numbers and are likely to have and even greater impact in the future with the effects of climate change.

Apart from the exaggerated brumby numbers, science has only focussed on the negative effects they have on “sensitive flora and fauna.” No attempt has been made to examine any positive elements in the scenario. Scientific studies fuelling the brumby debate appear to be remarkably brief in duration, with no long term studies that cover decades, yet alone any generational patterns of this species. The local residents of our Alpine regions are more knowledgeable of these things than the scientists that support brumby culling. At best this is shoddy and inadequate and hardly qualifies as science. My understanding of good science is prolonged, long term observations and investigations of a species, unbiased by any external agendas (e.g. by politicians, business interests etc) multiple theories tested, evidence of related interactions gathered and examined, other experts consulted and involved, inclusive of intuitive as well as rational examinations of multi level factors and so on.

In other words rather more than brumby hoof prints at water courses and a lot of guess work about the long term impact.

But leaving aside the inadequate “science” in the brumby scenario, what is even more disturbing is the measures it advocates to solve the so called brumby problem. Culling is the only solution science purposes (or is that the politicians?) Why when other more humane alternatives have been proposed, (controlled fertilisation, rehoming for example) which have been found to be effective in countries that take a more humane and civilised approach (for example the USA, UK, New Zealand).

Even more disturbing and unforgivable is the manner of these culls. They are disgusting, barbaric, shameful acts of brutality and violence. Nothing can justify aerial shooting of any non native species. Not even super man could manage a single shot in the two designated kill zones on a horse’s anatomy that are deemed, by animal welfare authorities such as the RSPCA, to be humane and enabling a swift death and no prolonged suffering. Photographic, on the ground evidence of aerially shot brumbies, reveal multiple gunshot wounds, wounds that cause prolonged, painful deaths. Agonising and violent deaths, foals starving alongside their butchered mothers - these are the images recorded in this killing field. Nothing can justify this, whether the target is a brumby, a wild donkey, a deer or a pig. It is a gutless system of extermination based on laziness and economics.

The whole issue of the brumby in our time is being viewed from a one dimensional, outsider perspective. It is a rationalisation of a multi dimensional issue which needs to be seen from the inside. As a first step it needs to be addressed as an interconnected species/ environment relationship, a holistic, ecological debate in which the negative human factor needs to be both owned and addressed. At present what we have is an immature form of finger pointing, a demonisation of certain species, scapegoats for our human inability to look deeply into the workings of nature and it’s evolutionary patterning and meanings. It is high time we stepped up to meet the challenges of the interaction of species and environment in a perspective that has both vision and long term goals, that includes compassion, respect, ethical concerns and justice. Holocaust solutions are not acceptable in our 21st century either in the animal or human kingdoms, nor in relation to the environments of this good earth which is our only home.

Yours sincerely Astaro Rose.