

Submission
No 127

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

Name: Miss Helen Guy

Date Received: 12 October 2023

I do not agree with ground or aerial shooting of Brumbies because both are proven to be cruel.

You should be aware of why there is currently Legislation to prevent aerial shooting, viz the Guy Fawkes Massacre and the Singleton Army Base Massacre.

<https://snowybrumby.wordpress.com/guy-fawkes-brumby-slaughter/#part4>

PLEASE VIEW THE VIDEO PARTICULARLY IN THIS REPORT

<https://www.2nurfm.com.au/news/hundreds-of-wild-horses-killed-during/>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-20/singleton-army-base-brumby-cull/10825206>

<https://www.2gb.com/nothing-short-of-a-massacre-aerial-culling-of-wild-brumbies-goes-ahead/>

During these massacres horses were not killed humanely as it is not possible to shoot a horse from a moving helicopter while the horse is moving. Horses need to be shot in the head for a clean kill. Some of these horses took up to 10 days to die. The trauma of what happened still haunts neighbours who had to view it. Interestingly one of the main perpetrators is the main architect of this current action which is abhorrent and an example of who we are dealing with.

This Enquiry should go back to basics and not even entertain the outlandish comments and performance of the people promoting this barbaric behaviour and the influence they have had on the government for way too many years. They were given priority in the Senate Enquiry in a very biased way particularly in the interview section of that Enquiry and the people speaking against time were cut short and in some cases not even included in Hansard.

Search your hearts also. Horses are as sentient as your own children. How would you like them treated? Why do you take an animal to a Vet to be euthanised? Why don't you just take your own animal out into your backyard and bash it with a hammer and let it die slowly. That would be the same as shooting a horse from a helicopter or even ground shooting a moving horse. Those who think aerial or ground shooting is humane do not know anything about a horses, either their conformation or their nature being a flight animal.

You are putting the cart before the horse – A realistic count without distances software must be undertaken .

Population counts are flawed, proven by Equine Scientist, Joanne Canning, and Biostatistician Claire Galea. If there were between 14,500 and 23,000 (although that seems to be increasing weekly and I think is now up to 25,000) why do people who walk extensively over those mountains weekly only see around 90 horses in a full day and they know where the mobs roam. There **must** be new population counts using different methodology. Based on evidence to date, **it is only reasonable the government must obtain a new population survey.** At least one Politician flew for a few hours in the northern area last year where the numbers are said to be 85% of the population and saw around 900 horses in the northern end. This year there have been thousands of horses trapped for rehomers, sent to abattoirs and shot particularly in the last few months as was discovered recently with bodies left to rot in the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee River and the Reservoir and very closes to walking tracks causing walkers to leave the mountain. The numbers of Brumbies now in the Park is likely to be 1,000 or even less which means no shooting is necessary in terms of the Management Plan.

Counting horses by helicopter and then adding on what you can't see and then putting it through a Scottish computer program designed for counting fish and birds is wrong, and even the St Andrews University does not agree with the eventual numbers which they know are not possible for the species and have said so. The horses are not increasing as is quoted – it is a travesty to keep reporting this utter nonsense.

Those who care to go to the mountains know the horses do not do the damage as is well documented by our submissions to the Senate Enquiry. This is also known to those who say they do have an impact but for some reason they hate horses and continually report outlandish facts, even against what the Taronga Zoo and Melbourne Museum say in relation to the Corroboree Frog. There is evidence of the good that horses do which is ignored and some of the species they are said to endanger are not even living where the horses are. One prominent supposed Professor even says horses can have up to 4 foals per year and he has seen them eating another horse and they chase cattle till they drop dead so would do the same to kangaroos!! Another that he had to dash into a public toilet to escape a horse. This man obviously has a phobia or another huge problem. This one calls himself a Professor but is only an Associate Professor and just given that title – in other words a Wheatbix Professor.

Lower real numbers are likely to confirm, gentle rehoming may be suitable and adequate, when an independent report on population and impact is prepared. Rehoming may not be warranted due to the lack of evidence about negative impacts, and low numbers, and removing brumbies will not change anything.

Neither ground or aerial shooting needs to be undertaken – and is not necessary

Shooting a mob of roaming brumbies will result in horses running after the first shot, whether or not a silencer is used. The startle of a horse falling will cause other horses to run with fear with a resultant blood bath even if the shooters try to take head shots, which will be impossible and has led to horses being found with gut shots, shots to the neck and back legs and mouth, all of which will have suffered long drawn-out deaths.

Animals are recognised as sentient beings. They feel pain and know fear. Ground shooting of the horses is of course NOT a humane method to manage a population of wild horses. From the dreadful footage from a Queensland Abattoir, it is blatantly obvious that even when contained in stocks and with “professionals”, that the horses are not able to be euthanised without often several attempts!!! The suffering of these horses is unimaginable! And therefore ground shooting of loose horses humanely would be an even more impossible task! And aerial shooting is even worse! Strict standards of animal welfare cannot be upheld with either ground shooting or aerial shooting. Horses will suffer extremely.

The Standard Operating Procedures that have been “put together “ for ground shooting of horses would NOT BE POSSIBLE TO ADHERE TO. As I am sure you are aware from photographs taken by local photographers, these SOPs have NOT been adhered to. It is impossible. It is stated that - “Any government-managed program will require that all appropriate Codes of Practice and Standard Operating Procedures are followed for all management activities.”

Ground shooting of feral horses (HOR001) <https://pestsmart.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/03/HOR001-SOP.pdf>

Shooting must be done with the appropriate firearms and ammunition and in a manner that aims to cause immediate insensibility and painless death. Shooters should not shoot at an animal unless it is clearly visible and they are confident of killing it with a single shot.

This did not happen with some of the dead horses inspected. Horses were shot in the stomachs, necks, near their rumps and mares aborted foals while dying slowly and were found with foals half out of their bodies. Mares have been found at times dead and with foals standing by. In most cases these foals cannot be saved even with veterinary help. Foals are supposed to be chased down and

shot. In one cases a mare was shot illegally and then her yearling must have come back and it was the only horse in the group to be shot legally. This must not be allowed to happen again.

Aerial shooting of feral horses (HOR002)

<https://pestsmart.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/03/HOR002-SOP.pdf>

If a horse cannot be shot with one bullet at an abattoir how can anybody think it is humane to shoot them from a helicopter either in the small spot in the head or in the chest, especially if they are moving.

Some shooters have written:

<https://steamcommunity.com/app/518790/discussions/0/1692669912394162665/>

"I think every single one of us has taken shots (including double lung shots) and seen: Animals that have dropped immediately. Animals that have jumped, walked away and died slowly/quickly. Animals that have jumped and run varying distances and died slowly/quickly. Animals that are wounded and lie down, get back up, take a few steps, lie back down and slowly die. That covers the range of what we'd see in normal life."

One horse in this last lot of massacres had obviously run a distance before dying which would have been in great pain. Some died looking over their shoulders and legs in positions they should not have been, died with their mouths open and even their tongues out indicating pain. They should die instantly for it to be humane. Only one horse in 40 had a head shot in one section.

NSW have a dreadful record of massacring Brumbies – the Singleton Army Base massacre of 1999 where 100 were shot and the Guy Fawkes Massacre of 2000 when they attempted to kill 600 but may have only shot 224. However horses were shot multiple times and it took up to 10 days for one horse to die.

The Guy Fawkes Massacre saw Parks being taken to Court and legislation to stop shooting.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

"Ground shooting is best suited to accessible and relatively flat areas where there are low numbers of horses." (23)(The plan in Victoria Alpine National Park is to remove 500 in the first year in the Eastern Alps and remove 100 from Bogong. Even larger numbers than this are being removed from the Kosciuszko National Park! These are NOT low numbers!

"Ground shooting is time consuming and labour intensive, and is therefore not considered an effective method for large scale control." (23)

(So not an effective method in this case then, as it is large scale)

"Ground shooting as a means of population control is not suitable in inaccessible, wooded or rough terrain where sighting of target animals and accurate shooting is difficult, or when wounded animals cannot easily be followed up and killed." (23)

(So again not suitable)

"Only head (brain) or chest (heart/lung) shots must be used. Shots to the head are preferred over chest shots as they are more likely to cause instantaneous loss of consciousness. Chest shots do not render the animals instantaneously insensible and are likely to result in a higher incidence of wounding. Shooting at other parts of the body is unacceptable." (23)

(For a group of say 10 horses, there would therefore need to be 10 shooters all perfectly positioned to deliver a perfect head shot at exactly the same time! Absolutely ludicrous! Or be able to position 2 shooters to possibly deliver 2 perfect shots at exactly the same time before the rest all gallop off. And that's if they can even get close enough to deliver even one single perfect shot!)

“Group flight response is a limiting factor for humane and instantaneous killing of horses.” (23)

(EXACTLY MY POINT)

“If possible, all horses in a group should be killed before any further groups are targeted.”(23)

(No chance)

“Wounded horses must be located and killed as quickly and humanely as possible with a second shot, preferably directed to the head. If left, wounded animals can escape and suffer from pain and the disabling effects of the injury.” (23)

(Unless very badly injured and not able to run away there would be no chance of finding the wounded animals with maybe horrendous serious life threatening injuries!)

“Horses must NOT be shot from a moving vehicle or other moving platform, as this can significantly detract from the shooter's accuracy.” (23)

(But aerial shooting is approved in Victoria)

“The objective is to fire at the closest range practicable in order to reduce the risk of non-lethal wounding. Accuracy with a single shot is important to achieve an immediate and therefore humane death. A horse should only be shot at when:

** it is stationary and can be clearly seen and recognised*

** it is within the effective range of the firearm and ammunition being used*

** a humane kill is probable. If in doubt, do NOT shoot.*

** Ensure there are no other horses behind the target animal that could be wounded by the shot passing through the target.*

** Although horses are large animals, the vital areas targeted for clean killing are small.” (23)*

(If all the above directives are followed, NO SHOTS would be delivered. So they would have to shoot and injure and hope they can follow up and reshoot - which is not following the SOPs)

“Shooting of individuals should stop when the flight response of the herd limits further accurate shooting.” (23)

(So that's either immediately or after one shot only)

“If the stallion is shot first the mares might panic and escape with their foals.” (23)

(Shouldn't be shooting anyway when mares have foals at foot)

Aerial Shooting

In a study done in Australia after aerial shooting wild horses it was found:

The Instant Death Rate was 63% - Absolutely not acceptable! (37)

Up to 6 bullets per horse peppered all over their bodies!(37)

In total, 35% of horses displayed bullet-wound tracts affecting the cranium, 50% the cervical spine, and 57% the thorax, whereas 3% of horses displayed bullet-wound tracts affecting the forelimbs and 8% the abdomen.(37)

Horses not rendered immediately insensible (37%)!!!! Absolutely NOT acceptable. (37)

Aerial shooting - Lets be realistic. Trained people in the slaughter houses with trained domestic horses held in stocks, are still not able to euthanise horses in an humane way successfully! So how anyone can possibly believe that it is possible to shoot a galloping horse from a moving helicopter and manage to get a shot direct in the very narrow spots to achieve instant humane euthanasia is beyond me. Hence the scenes we had from the Guy Fawkes incident and other similar incidents. In any case lethal control is not necessary and is cruel. These are sentient beings and they deserve life.

Finally, I oppose brumbies being shot in traps. It is cruel and unnecessary.

Conclusion:

I am totally against aerial shooting which can never be humane.

I am totally against ground shooting as it is proved even during 2022 and 2023 that it cannot be humane.

I am totally against shooting in traps.

A realistic count must be undertaken with all stakeholders present which I know will prove there would be no more than 1,000 horses in the whole Park and the evidence of no damage to be acknowledged.

Helen Guy