

**Submission  
No 129**

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

**Name:** Mr Peter Cornick

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## SUBMISSION

on the

### Proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park

by

Peter Cormick,

12 October 2023

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It is surprising, to say the least, and concerning, that the committee's self-referred terms of reference list animal welfare concerns in 5<sup>th</sup> place, given that the committee is the Animal Welfare Committee. The proposed aerial shooting of horses is, surely, all about animal welfare.

In advising the public of the proposed amendments to Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan 2021, the [Department of Planning and Environment's website](#) commences with the following statements, with which I strongly disagree (emphases added):

*The draft amendment proposes to authorise aerial shooting as an available method to control wild horses, in addition to existing methods such as ground shooting, trapping and rehoming.*

*The ability to conduct **aerial shooting is essential** if the wild horse population is to be reduced ...*

And goes on to state, *inter alia*, that:

*Aerial shooting of wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park would be carried out to the **highest animal welfare standards**. ... Aerial shooting would be very carefully implemented using our specialist shooters and aircraft to ensure it is safe and **meets the highest animal welfare standards**.*

Given that the Department/Project Team has already decided that aerial shooting cannot be avoided, that it is "essential", it would appear that the consultation process with the minister, through the department, is no more than one of simply meeting the box-ticking legislated requirement to undertake public consultation. I trust that the committee will be acting quite independently of the department's already-established position.

It is the claim that the "highest animal welfare standards" would be met that gives rise to most concern. Anyone unfamiliar with horses, their high level of sentience and their behaviours when under threat and terrified, or with the immense challenges of achieving 'clean kills' from a helicopter, will very likely, naively, accept the nonsense being presented. A mere 1 mm deviation from the end of a rifle barrel will result in a 50 mm deviation from a target just 50 metres away. And so, with a highly mobile, unstable chopper, being buffeted about, and a horse galloping, jumping and weaving, the likelihood of a 'clean kill' to the brain is remote. This fact is recognised by the experts who the department relies upon (emphasis added)<sup>1</sup>:

*Shots to the head should only be attempted at short ranges and in ideal conditions. The brain is a relatively small target that is well protected by bone. **Only the slightest misplacement of the bullet can result in nonlethal and debilitating wounds, such as a broken jaw.***

And in more detail, from the same experts (emphases added)<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pestsmart.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/03/HOR002-SOP.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://pestsmart.org.au/toolkit-resource/code-of-practice-feral-horses/>

**Shooting from a moving platform** [at a wildly moving target] **can significantly detract from the shooter's accuracy** therefore helicopter shooting operations do not always [in fact, as a matter of course, do not] result in a clean kill for all animals. Follow-up procedures are essential to ensure that all wounded animals are killed.

With aerial shooting of horses, 'double-tap' chest shots (2 quick shots) **are most frequently made**, as the heart and lungs are the largest vital area and an accurate shot is more achievable particularly within the range of unusual angles encountered when shooting from above. Although death from a chest shot may be more certain, compared to an accurate headshot, **a shot to the chest does not render the animal instantaneously insensible and time to death is slower**. (Trudy Sharp and Glen Saunders, 2012. Model code of practice for the humane control of feral horses. Standard Operating Procedure.)

And so, the most frequent method of killing, with two shots to the chest, results in a slower death, the 'experts' admit. That is to say, the horse suffers terribly, for who knows how long - possibly a lingering, excruciating death of a day or more. Shocking stuff! That is not humane in anyone's book. That is gross cruelty, and most certainly warranting prosecution under the NSW *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (POCTAA).

Section 5 of the POCTAA prohibits any form of cruelty upon an animal (emphases added):

#### **5 CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

(1) A person **shall not commit an act of cruelty upon an animal**. ... and, s 4(2) of the POCTAA states

*For the purposes of this Act, a reference to an act of cruelty committed upon an animal includes a reference to any act or omission as a consequence of which the animal is unreasonably, unnecessarily or unjustifiably--*

(a) *beaten, kicked, killed, **wounded, pinioned, mutilated, maimed, abused, tormented, tortured, terrified or infuriated,***

(b) *over-loaded, over-worked, **over-driven, over-ridden or over-used,***

(c) *exposed to excessive heat or excessive cold, or*

(d) ***inflicted with pain.***

But, regardless of this legislation, for anyone who has or has had the privilege of spending time with horses, caring for them, riding them, talking to them and forming strong bonds with them, and knowing first hand just how intelligent and highly sentient they are, this issue is a very straightforward one; especially for anyone who also has firsthand experience in the necessary shooting and killing of animals and knows the challenges of a so-called clean head shot, even when conditions are ideal.

Aerial shooting of horses is most definitely not humane, and it is galling to hear it described as such. It is unquestionably grossly cruel to chase down a herd of terrified horses from a helicopter and fire upon them, leaving them wounded, dying, traumatised and suffering; and for the mares and foals, a particularly devastating form of cruelty.

**I therefore respectfully request that the committee recommend to the parliament that there should be NO aerial shooting of horses in NSW, at any time.**

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