

Submission
No 137

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 13 October 2023

Partially
Confidential

- An aerial cull should not be considered a viable option.
- An aerial cull is inherently unable to provide a humane instantaneous kill shot.
- A true reckoning of the current numbers of horses within the park should be undertaken by people on the ground - not an aerial count that is inherently flawed.
- Full consideration should be given to the benefits of herbivorous grazers within the park.
- An unbiased survey should be undertaken to consider direct impact of horses on the endangered native species used as justification for the push for aerial cull.

I am writing in regard to the proposed resumption of aerial culling of Brumbies in the high country of Mt Kosciuszko.

Firstly I note the contentious issue surrounding the numbers based on inaccurate methodology that does not take into consideration the ability of the terrain to support brumby populations (resulting in brumby numbers being allocated to areas where there are no or minimal populations) and also the fact that the animal in consideration is a nomadic herbivore with vast ranging territory - meaning individuals can be counted multiple times.

Numerous Brumby supporters and groups have for years been walking the mountain range, naming and numbering the individual mobs that are up there. Being on the ground, with photographic documentation of each individual horse, the numbers they have listed are far more accurate, and falls well below the current legislated retention numbers - even selecting a median point between these widely disparate population counts, the proposed cull would push the current brumby population to the brink of sustainability and would cause a great loss to the collective heritage of Australia's colonial past.

But leaving that aside, the idea of an aerial cull for horses is abhorrent and cannot be viewed as a humane method of control.

The horse as a target has only 1 extremely small target zone for a truly instantaneous kill - aimed in the middle of the forehead, but slightly higher than the position for cattle.

The structure of a horse's skull makes this the only viable clean shoot, an area of approximately 2cm diameter.

This shot is impossible when shooting from a distance, from a moving base (helicopter) with zero stability, and with the horses panicked and galloping in a closely grouped herd.

Because of the above, it has been deemed through proposal and through RSPCA that a chest shot - heart shot may be substituted, but this will not incur instantaneous death and with a high number of miss-targeted shots horses will be left to bleed out and suffer long and inhumane deaths. The images of foals left standing over their mothers, or mares spontaneously aborting will be a common occurrence.

Once shot, the Parks are considering leaving the carcasses to rot in place - as is current practice - this will increase the easily accessible food sources for truly dangerous feral pests such as pigs and will likely increase their numbers exponentially and thereby increasing both danger to the tourists and visitors to the park, and to the endangered species themselves as pigs and deer are known to be wallowers that do great damage to the river banks and delicately balanced ecosystems.

The Park will never be able to achieve its apparent goal of returning to pristine pre-colonization ecology, and we should instead be supporting the best balance we can to support both native and heritage animals.

Without the horses (and cattle) grazing the high country, the introduced grasses and vegetation will remain rampant increasing bushfire threats and hastening the destruction of the park overall. Note the bushfires of the last few years - the areas known to be frequented by brumby grazers did not suffer the equal intensity of areas where they have been severely reduced.

Our native species alone cannot do this as they eat the native grasses/plants etc preferentially. Until the introduced vegetation is controlled, we need to consider introduced grazers as a management option. Brumby grazing keeps the area safer for the regenerative levels of fire needed by our native ecology for germination.

Most species listed as the reasoning for the 'need' for a brumby cull, have been proven to live alongside brumby populations, with little detrimental effect and even to thrive under the protective benefits of the larger herbivores - keeps pig and wild dog population away, reduction of threat of fire, create single line tracks for easy transit across area and provide fire break.

In short, although the current submission is relating to the direct choice of aerial culling, it is easy to see that the arguments and methodologies pertaining to wild horse management in Australia should be fundamentally revisited and re-evaluated.

Please use this moment of question to open up the other avenues of discussion around the brumby contention.

They are a significant part of our heritage and our history, and a joy to see in the high country - where they belong, just as we Australians of european or other heritages belong to this beautiful sunburnt country.