

**Submission  
No 164**

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

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10 October 2023

## SUBMISSION RE PROPOSED AERIAL SHOOTING OF BRUMBIES IN KNP

To members of the inquiry

Over the years I have sent countless submissions and tried relentlessly to directly contact NPWS, heads of nsw environment depts. as well as successive ministers. I continue to maintain there is NO justification for the mass cruel slaughter of these horses based primarily on misinformation and long held hatreds. Recently over the last couple of weeks 100s of horses bodies were seen by hikers left on the ground in KNP and many died slow deaths – this is what the NPWS calls humane?

### AERIAL SHOOTING

Numbers can only be estimated so helicopter counts are often aligned with local knowledge and those numbers have been grossly exaggerated particularly since the 2019/20 wildfires. Claims these horses are doing damage to the environment are also exaggerated, it's quite possible these lands may likely be leased to much more destructive pastoral interests?

Aerial culling is NOT a humane compassionate practice as “professionals” will tell you, shooting a moving target from a moving platform rarely results in a kill shot. These animals die slowly from gut, hip, shoulder shots, usually with a broken leg or two from the fall, pregnant mares will abort foals in agony and foals stand besides deceased mares for days starving. Is this purely a campaign by interested Ministers, Pastoralists, and Departments to cash in using deceit, lies and discretion to their own advantage. Is it cheaper to shoot from a helicopter than to trap, muster and rehome? The rotting carcasses of the slaughtered brumbies attract and increase the population of introduced species such as foxes, and encourage weed growth. While the horses are furiously chased by helicopters the helicopter rotors blow the topsoil away.

Brumbies have been an important part of ecosystems for example to the whereabouts of water during drought helping native animals that would otherwise risk dehydration and death. The digestive system of the brumby, unlike those of sheep and cattle, does not destroy the seeds of plants so they are able to contribute to the regeneration of plant species across vast areas. In addition, the waste from horses sustains many bugs, birds and insects that scavenge worms, seeds and undigested fodder.

Cattle would do far more environmental damage, then handfuls of horses that were dumped by our forefathers. They were our mounts in times of war, the backbone of Australian Developments and settlement, and are an Australian Icon never to be repeated. They deserve more than this end, and our Government and business must be open, accountable and at the very least factual in the information they doll out for their ends.

## TRAPPING

Here is a short profile about trapped horses (details from 2012 spring season in Victoria however this occurs across the high country no matter which state) Despite being urged strongly against this, for obvious welfare reasons of trapping during foaling season, we assured them that horses would die if such an activity occurred. We gave this advice on the telephone and in writing and were ignored. The trapping program commenced in late October 2012. In the first few days of November, we were advised that a group of Brumbies had been caught and transported to our holding facility. Within 18 hours, we were called by the family at the holding facility to let us know that something was VERY wrong. The mares were collapsing and some had started to convulse. All the Brumbies were dehydrated, not eating well, not drinking from the artificial waterers, preferring to tip them over and try to drink as the water ran across the dusty ground.

We instantly got onto the local vet who attended promptly. The scene she was met with was horrific. Three mares, convulsing on the ground, one with her foal standing over her, trying to feed. We won't go into all the details – those that died, died an awful death. Some of these mares were late pregnancy, some were quite early. When the remaining surviving mare foaled nine months later at our sanctuary, she bled out, due likely to adhesions which had occurred between her placenta and uterus that day when she was so sick.

Vets statement regards the symptoms which were:

“...most likely due to Hypocalcaemia. Hypocalcaemia and mineral deficiencies can be exacerbated with exertion, dehydration and overheating. Stress will also increase the propensity for a Hypocalcaemic crisis.”

The Vet goes on to give a damning statement that:

“The reason that I am writing this letter to describe in detail the events of Sunday afternoon is that the situation was avoidable by simply not choosing to bring the horses from the High Country for yarding and transport at this time of year. These horses should not have come down from the High Country in such heat in full lactation and with the possibility of pregnancy. It is a very stressful process for an animal to endure, regardless of other factors, but these other factors, especially the severe heat, made this episode entirely predictable. It will happen again, if the practice of transporting horses at this time of year continues. I recommend that to transport horses during the hotter months is an act of cruelty as defined by the Victorian Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1996), section 9, 1b: An act of cruelty is committed if a person ‘loads, crowds or confines animals where the loading, crowding or confining of the animal causes, or is likely to cause, unreasonable pain or suffering to the animal’ and section 9 1e: An act of cruelty is committed if a person ‘works, rides, drives or uses an animal when it is unfit for the purpose with the result that unreasonable pain or suffering is caused to the animal’”.

“Given our knowledge of the event of Sunday, the practice of brining horses from the High Country during the hotter months of November, December, January and February should be considered in breach of the Victorian Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1996). With this current knowledge, whoever may make the management decision to continue this practice should be considered in breach of this Act and possibly liable for prosecution.”

This morning, we were contacted by Parks Victoria to advise that they were about to commence a trapping program at Mt Nelse (near Bogong High Plains), expecting to be actively trapping Brumbies

'as soon as possible, likely November'. Once again, I debated this with Parks and once again, they hid behind utter nonsense. They 'have taken the advice of the Technical Reference Group (TRG)'! We are happy to provide details to back this up, but the TRG has NOT ONE member who has ever participated actively in a trapping program or spent time with yarded wild horses. Why are Parks 'relying' on the TRGs advice over that of a Vet who has TREATED these Brumbies as they lay dying? Why are they taking the TRGs advice over a professional rescue group who has taken in more than 550 Brumbies over twelve years?

How many Brumbies have to die?

...and yes, we agreed to take on any Brumbies that are trapped as a result of the upcoming program. If we can't stop the trapping, we CAN offer sanctuary.

....and YES, we have also advised NPWS of this situation – they don't care either! They are currently undertaking a trapping program of their own, cleverly timed to run before ever the Community Advisory Panel has had a chance to meet and against the advice of every wild horse professional.

This methodology is the same in NSW and Victoria and none of it is acceptable. I had always hoped to represent the Brumbies and to ensure that the Kosciuszko Brumby Act plays out how it was intended - to see the humane and sustainable management of the Kosciuszko Brumbies and ensure their role in our heritage is recognised.

I implore media and governing bodies to investigate this matter and highlight the inconsistencies in the actions and words played out.

thankyou

Kerry Hewson

Culburra Beach & Coogee NSW

Kerry H. Sent from my iPhone