



NSW government's horse slaughter in Kosciuszko National Park

The Animal Protectors Alliance has condemned the NSW government's plan to kill thousands of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park as:

- inevitably cruel and ethically abhorrent;
- inherently ineffective and environmentally counterproductive; and
- knowingly deceitful and hypocritical.

In APA's submission on this matter to the NSW government, environmental scientist and animal advocate, Frankie Seymour, noted:

At best, it is treating a symptom while the disease rages on unchecked. At worst, it is a scapegoating exercise, blaming innocent victims for the reign of destruction white settlement has inflicted, and continues to inflict on Australian native biodiversity.

APA spokesperson, Robyn Soxsmith explains that the cruelty arises primarily from the inevitably high wounding rate of shooting a moving target (horses) from a moving platform (helicopter), the impossibility of getting close enough to euthanase wounded animals in the inaccessible terrain, and the orphaning of dependent foals.

The second argument, that the killing will be ineffective and counterproductive, arises from the fact that it will be impossible to kill all of the horses, once again because of the inaccessible terrain.

The APA submission explains that failing to kill every single horse ensures that every single horse shot will be replaced by the progeny of the survivors within relatively few years. The landscape will continue to be ideal habitat for the horses, and the killing will vastly increase the resources available to each and every survivor.

"What's more," Ms Soxsmith adds, "Most of the dominant stallions will be killed, and it's the stallions who maintain fertility control within the herd. So, after a brief reduction in population immediately following the mass slaughter, the inevitable result will be not fewer horses, but a higher population of horses than you started with."

APA argues that this artificially higher population will be sustained in perpetuity, unless the killing stops for long enough for new dominant stallions to establish themselves, at which point the population will stabilise back where it was before the killing started.

APA accepts that the biodiversity of Kosciusko National Park has been affected by the pre-park legacy impacts of the horses, along with land clearing, sheep and cattle grazing, introduced plants, roads, ski resorts, and all the other devastating impacts of white settlement.



"We have to work to save the altered ecosystems we have now, not the ones white settlement has destroyed," Ms Soxsmith argues. "Losing so many species, so many individual lives, was a tragedy beyond words, but what is done is done."

Of more immediate concern to APA are claims that the horses are damaging the headwaters of Australia's most significant river system by trampling the vegetation (such as sphagnum moss).

"Obviously creating and artificially sustaining a higher population of horses via a mass killing spree is going to make any damage the horses are doing worse, not better," Ms Soxsmith notes. " But that's not really the point."

"The point is that the only reason the horses' range has recently extended to those headwaters is because human induced climate change is raising the snowline. It's the raising of the snowline and the consequential die-back of the water-hugging, snow-dependent vegetation that store the water that is the real threat to the river system."

"This is what makes it clear these horse killing plans are just another scapegoating exercise, blaming and persecuting innocent animals to distract attention from Australia's abject failure to address the real environmental issues like mass extinctions and climate change," Ms Soxsmith concludes.

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