

Wild horse management

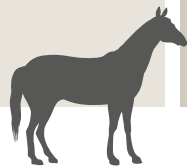
State-wide review of pest animal management

Final report



The issue

- Australia has almost one million wild horses - the largest wild population in the world.
- NSW's wild horses are mainly found in alpine and sub-alpine regions, damaging fragile wetlands and other environments unaccustomed to hard-hooved animals.
- There are around 6,000 wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park. Although over 2,000 horses have been removed over the last five years, horse numbers are still increasing by 6 to 17 percent every year.
- Wild horses or "brumbies" are seen by many as an Australian cultural icon with strong social and historic importance. Their management can be an emotive issue and needs to be handled sensitively.
- Management needs to strike a balance between respecting heritage values, while at the same time effectively and humanely reducing numbers of wild horses in sensitive environments.



Current status

- Across Australia, wild horses are controlled by ground and aerial shooting, fertility control, immobilisation and lethal injection, exclusion fencing, mustering and trapping.
- Under the draft 2016 *Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Management Plan*, the NSW Government proposes to reduce wild horse numbers in the park from 6,000 to 600 over 20 years.
- Consistent with NSW Government policy, the draft 2016 plan rules out the use of aerial shooting. This is despite an independent technical reference group's finding that aerial shooting is a cost-effective and humane option in some conditions.
- Without access to aerial shooting as a control method, it will be difficult to meet the proposed wild horse population reduction targets without considerable investment.

Final report recommendations

The final report recommends:

- Recognise the heritage value of wild horses within management programs and maintain an acceptable population outside of protected ecologically sensitive areas.
- Ensure the *Kosciuszko National Park Draft Wild Horse Management Plan 2016* aligns with regional pest management priorities, integrates control techniques including aerial and ground shooting, and provides for independent and transparent evaluation.

