



OFFICIAL POLICY

Feral horse management in national parks



Feral horses damage alpine and threaten native wildlife.
Image credit: Cosmo magazine

After a Ministerial announcement in 2000 that feral horses were to be humanely removed from the Guy Fawkes National Park, the NPWS produced a plan in 2004 (revised in 2006) that intended horse removal within five years; a managed herd off park; and monitoring of the plan's effectiveness, humaneness and ecological impacts.

The NPWS in northern NSW has worked hard to produce the best plans for horse management possible, despite the continued ban on the most humane and effective control method - aerial culling. These Plans are superior to the weak Kosciuszko wild horse plans of 2003, 2006 and 2008 that have failed to curb the feral horse population explosion in Kosciuszko. The new Kosciuszko wild horse plan is aligned with the Guy Fawkes wild horse plan except it does not aim to remove all horses, but this plan should be supported.

HORSE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Wilderness Australia supports:

- Effective and humane removal of horses so that national parks can be managed free of horses
- Recognition that, under previous management regimes, many horses were sent to the abattoir if not valued for human use (a far less humane outcome than on site shooting under strict protocols)
- Removal methods that do not cause a significant impact on the environment
- Evaluation and appropriate modification of removal methods

HORSE MANAGEMENT METHODS

Wilderness Australia supports:

- Performance based contracts
- Reconsideration of alternative control methods if those to be trialled are not initially effective, or are of limited effectiveness as the Park's horse population decreases (alternative methods should include aerial shooting under strict protocols e.g. FAAST protocols for aerial shooting)

Does not support:

- That "acceptance by the wider community" should be a consideration for feral horse management decisions, if this "acceptance" negates the use of methods which have been independently declared both humane and effective.

CONTROL METHODS TO BE TRIALLED

Wilderness Australia supports:

- Trapping in yards and trap paddocks with strict monitoring of ecological impacts, including those of trap construction and removal
- Trapping of horses using low stress behavioural techniques with strict monitoring of ecological impacts the exclusion of roping as a capturing technique due to its relative inefficiency, infliction of stress on the horses and the ecological impacts of running horses
- Mustering, including aerial mustering

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Wilderness Australia supports:

- Annual evaluation of effectiveness of trial, with consequential modification of techniques, in order to reduce the horse population to zero in five years monitoring of impact of horses on flora, fauna and soils,

only in that it may provide more quantitative, site specific data in order to reduce polarisation of the current feral horse debate. Previous research, and extrapolation of impact data from other sites, continues to support the NSW legislative mandate to remove feral horses from conservation reserves.

- Monitoring of the environmental impact of the removal programme

Does not support:

- Any decision to stop managing horses, if the control methods prove to be causing greater environmental damage than the existing presence of free-ranging horses in the park. Rather, poor control outcomes are a clear signal that the NSW Government must lift the NSW ban on aerial shooting which is the most humane, effective and, arguably, least ecologically damaging method of removing horses from national parks.

*Australian Foundation for Wilderness Limited. ACN 001 112 143 ABN 84 001 112 143
Advocating as Wilderness Australia. Formerly The Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd.
PO Box K335, Haymarket, 1240, NSW. Registered Office 10/154 Elizabeth Street Sydney NSW
2000.*

Telephone (02) 9261 2400

www.wildernessaustralia.org.au

contact@wildernessaustralia.org.au