

# Brumby Bridges



The quarterly newsletter of the ABA  
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## INTERNATIONAL WILD EQUID CONFERENCE 2012

In September, Colleen O'Brien from the Victorian Brumby Association was lucky enough to be chosen to make a presentation at the first ever International Wild Equid Conference in Vienna, Austria.

The International Wild Equid Conference was hosted by the Vienna Veterinary University to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the reintroduction to the wild of the Mongolian Wild Horse, or Przewalski Horse.

The conference covered so many different facets of wild equids, from their genetic makeup to their management. There were several studies on population ecology, including a fascinating one where the researchers had studied not only the diet of the wild horses in a particular area, but how they interacted with

their diet, that is, how often they grazed or browsed on it, how the plants recovered and whether there were benefits to the plants and the plant community.

Three other Aussies also presented at the International Wild Equid conference; Magdalena Zabek from Queensland presented on the population density work that she is doing with the Brumbies of South Eastern Queensland, Dave Berman from Queensland presented on three different Brumby management programs that he has been involved in and Frances Dinn from New South Wales presented on the initial conclusions that she has drawn from her research into the different training and settling methods used by different Brumby groups in Australia.

The thing that attending the conference cemented for Colleen was how important

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it is for us as Brumby advocates to have good, robust scientific study undertaken. In so many situations, we are faced with attempting to help Brumbies who are being managed where there is either no science or clear knowledge at all, or possibly even worse, literature reviews have been done on wild horse populations in different forests and sometimes different parts of the world!

If you're working with Brumbies in any area and feel that there are specific studies that would benefit the Brumbies and your management or involvement with them, do please contact Jill at the ABA contact details on the front page.

The conference also offered the

opportunity to meet and learn from people working with wild equids both in Australia and overseas. There is much we can learn, both positive and negative, from other countries management of their 'wild ones' and we are really thrilled to have made some good contacts and friends. The photo above shows the 'Aussie contingent' of Colleen O'Brien, Magdalena Zabek, Frances Dinn and Dave Berman.

The next Brumby Bridges will have more information on some of the specific studies presented in Vienna, but if you have any questions in the meantime, do please contact either Jill Pickering or Colleen O'Brien.

### Research

Frances Dinn, the research student from Charles Sturt University, has almost finalised her project titled *A survey of techniques for re-homing of Brumbies as a method of controlling the feral population*. We look forward to hearing the results around the end of 2012, and a summary of findings in the next *Brumby Bridges*.

Jill and Colleen O'Brien have had some interesting discussions with an overseas visitor who has some research background, lives in Vienna and is passionate about helping our Australian Brumbies. We are drafting research ideas on the value of our Brumby and our Social Heritage, how Brumbies can live in harmony in our National Parks, and how we might find partners to fund and run research programs in the future. This type of research is long overdue, and will form a large focus of ABA activities during 2013.

### Website

We have revamped the ABA website and are looking for feedback from our Brumby Bridge readers about the type of Brumby information they would like to access on our site, so please email your comments in to pickjill@hotmail.com

### **QPWS North Queensland – “Trap for rehoming” trial**

After several hiccups over the past year Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and a North Queensland rehoming contractor have signed a contract that focuses on “Trap for Rehoming” for two areas near Townsville, North Queensland. This pilot has arisen as a result of the strong objections raised by many Australian Brumby Alliance member groups about the regular aerial culling of Brumbies in Carnarvon National Park. The Townsville locations were considered by QPWS to be

more suitable to trial a Rehoming Focus Trial due to lower Brumby numbers and more accessible terrain. See more details page 6.

### ABA AGM

The Australian Brumby Alliance held its AGM in November 2012. The focus for 2013 will be on the Heritage status of Brumbies for 2013, along with continuing the work that each member group volunteers to provide greater opportunities for rehoming excess Brumbies that are removed by relevant State National Parks organisation's management programs.

### **Horses and People article**

Anne Wilson provided an article on Australian Brumbies, on behalf of the Australian Brumby Alliance that came out in the November edition of *Horses and People*. Many thanks Anne, we were thrilled with how the article came out!

### **International Wild Horse Conference 2012**

Colleen has returned from her recent attendance and presentation at the First Wild Horse Conference in Vienna, Austria, and now several great ideas to follow up on over the next twelve months. We look forward to seeing what can be developed to aid the cause of the Australian Brumby.



## SAVE THE BRUMBIES UPDATE

It has been a stressful year for us with the sad passing of Bob Bartlett in April. Megan Hyde is now sole resident manager of our New England Brumby Sanctuary (NEBS) and is doing a fantastic job with the occasional assistance of Jason Jones, our newly elected Horse Consultant.

We have an Open Day at NEBS on Sunday 21 October and all are warmly invited to attend if in our area of NSW. Our website has details and photos of our stunning weanlings who will be ready for Adoption by the end of the year.

A recent visitor from Austria, Regina Webhofer, proved a great asset to both Megan and myself by volunteering at our Bellingen Sanctuary as well as NEBS.

Regina intends to return to Australia and is working on a research project involving the behaviour patterns of horses world wide. Her experiences with the Mustangs and her time spent there was informative. For the record, Regina believes our programs are a vast improvement on the Bureau of Land Management programs and we do it without any assistance from Government.

However, on a positive note, funding from the Federal Government has been approved for the program 'Care for Country' involving indigenous people and this will result in a lot more horses being removed from Guy Fawkes in the coming year.

*JAN CARTER* for STB Inc.



## Odd Spot - Domestic Equids Can Still 'Chill' Like Their Ancestors

by: Maureen Blaney Flietner - April 24 2012, Article # 19919

While today's domestic horses rely on humans for many of their survival needs, a recent study by researchers in Germany demonstrated that domestication has not removed all their "wild" abilities.

The results of the study, led by Lea Brinkmann, MSc, and colleagues at the University of Göttingen in Germany, indicate horses can still slow their body processes to conserve energy when food is short and temperatures are cold, important survival characteristics for their wild ancestors.

Although research has revealed signs of hypometabolism, or slowing of body processes, in the Przewalski horse, the closest living wild relative of the domesticated horse, previous research suggested that today's livestock had lost that ability because selection pressure was not needed to maintain it.

For the current year-long study, Brinkmann and her team evaluated 10 domestic Shetland ponies accustomed to outdoor housing. The ponies, aged 4 to 16 years, resided in semi-natural outdoor conditions: pasture in summer and paddocks with open stables in winter.

In summer the ponies had access

to water and grass and were provided with hay, straw, and a mineral supplement. In winter the researchers split the ponies into one control group and one feed-restricted group to simulate natural seasonal food shortages; the feed-restricted group received first 80%, and then 70%, of recommended energy and protein requirements. Researchers recorded the ponies' ambient temperature, subcutaneous temperature, locomotor activity, lying time, resting heart rate, body mass, and body condition score.

The team found that the feed-restricted ponies exhibited reduced heart rate and subcutaneous temperatures in the winter, which are both signs of hypometabolism. The researchers concluded that domesticated horses, through seasonal fluctuations in their metabolic rate, can still adapt to seasonal environmental conditions.

The study, "Adaptation strategies to seasonal changes in environmental conditions of a domesticated horse breed, the Shetland pony (*Equus ferus caballus*)," was published in the April 2012 issue of *The Journal of Experimental Biology*.

The abstract is available [online](#).

## CLEMANT QUEENSLAND – TRAP FOR REHOMING PROJECT

After some shaky moments since the Australian Brumby Alliance held their first meeting with senior officers in Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) last September, to explore alternative management options for North Queensland's wild horse populations, a "Trap for rehoming" contract has been signed between Mark Hoffman and QPWS. Mark Hoffman of North Queensland Horse Services comments:

*I would like to officially state that as of the 3rd of September, trapping for re-homing of the Brumbies in Clemant State Forest and Bowling Green National Park is well underway.*

*The programme was established to demonstrate a humane, Rehoming focus for controlling local Wild horse population. It has been a long hard road for the most part as I have been on this campaign for our heritage horses for the last 3 yrs. The outcome has been better than most had expected with*

*negotiations with parks moving in a positive direction and a possible option to extend the program another 2yrs to aid the programme's success.*

*With many thanks going to the Australian Brumby Alliance, including Save The Brumbies, SEQ Brumby Association, and local QPWS staff for their support in getting this project started. It is the first for North Queensland QPWS to focus on Rehoming Wild Horses.*

The trapping for the most part is going as well as can be expected with bushfires that have impacted on the trapping side of the project. Already 10% of the 60 horses to be removed this year have successfully been trapped.

The ABA will be closely monitoring progress of the Trap for Rehoming trial, and QPWS will be evaluating progress during the contract period and at its conclusion to increase awareness of the potential for Trap for Rehoming programs.

## SNOWY MOUNTAINS BUSH USERS GROUP

### HORSE RIDERS WIN AGAIN

President of the Snowy Mountains Bush Users Group Peter Cochran has praised a decision by the O'Farrell/Stoner Coalition Government for continuing to

honour an MOU with horse riders established while they were in Opposition.

"Restoring horse riders access to heritage and historic sites within



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## National Parks

demonstrates a clear vision by the Government to give Parks back to the people”, Mr Cochran said.

“For 16 years the former Labor Party Government, driven by extreme environment groups, progressively eroded the freedom of responsible citizens and Family groups to access and appreciate their Parks.”

“Horse Riders across the State who choose to ride in the Kosciouzko National Park and far south coast owe a debt of gratitude to Member for Monaro John Barilaro and Member for Bega Andrew Constance who persistently and

aggressively argued our case at the highest levels” Mr Cochran explained.

“We are also conscious and grateful for the efforts of the Minister for the Environment, Robyn Parker, and NPWS Staff particularly Bob Conroy and Holly Park who walked a tight rope finding the balance to progress our cause.”

“Our work has just begun, we have turned the tide, horse riders are back on the scene” Mr Cochran concluded.

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## EDITOR'S DESK

Apologies for the late appearance of the Brumby Bridges. Our regular editor, Greg Kidd has been unwell and I have stepped in. As with many of the volunteer roles that help keep our organisations going forwards, often the time we really appreciate that contribution is when it isn't there!

Best wishes to Greg from all of us for a speedy recovery (maybe prior to the next Brumby Bridges?!).

There is so much happening in Australian Brumby circles right now, from Clemant in Queensland, Armidale in New South Wales and Barmah in Victoria and over to Esperance in Western Australia and much of it is the result of many

years hard work by a small group of dedicated advocates. It's wonderful to read of the progress that each group is making.

Have a wonderful restful Christmas and keep in mind the next Brumby Bridges deadline — the 1st of February 2013. We love to be able to include photos and news from all our member groups and Brumby owners all over Australia, so if you've got something that you'd like to get out there, from upcoming events to important information or news to beautiful pictures, do pass them on to Jill Pickering at [pickjill@hotmail.com](mailto:pickjill@hotmail.com) or Colleen O'Brien at [davcolobee@bigpond.com](mailto:davcolobee@bigpond.com)

## National Brumby Week 2013: March 18—24th

National Brumby Week is an initiative developed by members of the Australian Brumby Alliance aimed at raising the profile of Brumbies in Australia. The co-ordinator for 2013 is Colleen O'Brien and we are really thrilled to see the range of activities that member groups are preparing and supporting. Suggestions ranged from barbeques at local hardware stores, media releases, trail rides and open days.

**South East Queensland Brumby Association** is running a Brumby Weekend with the Redlands Australian Trail Horse Riding Association (ATHRA) club. The weekend will include a Brumby training display, Brumby spotting bus tour, a talk on Brumby management in Australia and within the Toolara State Forest and an ATHRA led horse riding tour into the

forest where the Brumbies live.

**Hunter Valley Brumby Association** is running a fun Beach Ride and BBQ with their local ATHRA group.

**Victorian Brumby Association** will be holding a Beach ride and BBQ as well as running an awareness raising campaign through local and statewide media.

**Kaimanawa Heritage Horse Welfare Society** is planning to assist with awareness and media for Australian groups and will also continue their awareness raising work for their local Kaimanawa horses.

All information will be on the ABA website and media releases will be made as the time draws nearer. We hope you can make it to a Brumby Week activity in your region!





## Australian Brumby Alliance member groups

Save The Brumbies Inc. (NSW) - [www.savethebrumbies.org](http://www.savethebrumbies.org)

Oxley Heritage Horse Association (NSW) -  
<http://oxleyheritagehorses.com.au/>

Coffin Bay Brumby Preservation Society Inc. (SA)  
[www.coffinbaybrumby.org.au](http://www.coffinbaybrumby.org.au)

Victorian Brumby Association Inc. –  
[www.victorianbrumbyassociation.org](http://www.victorianbrumbyassociation.org)

Outback Heritage Horse Association of Western Australia Inc. -  
<http://ohhawa.com.au/>

The Australian Brumby Horse Register – [www.abhr.com.au](http://www.abhr.com.au)

Snowy Mountains Bush Users Group Inc. (NSW) – [www.smbug.com](http://www.smbug.com)

SEQ Brumby Association Inc. (QLD) – [www.seqbrumby.com](http://www.seqbrumby.com)

Kaimanawa Heritage Horse Welfare Society (NZ)  
– <http://kaimanawa.homestead.com>

The Hunter Valley Brumby Association Inc. (NSW) — [www.hvba.com.au](http://www.hvba.com.au)



**Reminder:** the Next *Brumby Bridges* deadline for items to print is 1 February 2013