



Rescue & Care of Wild Horses in Australia

General Advice & Set-Up Notes for
A Wild Horse Re-Homing Organisation
& for Wild Horse Rescue Within Australia



Compiled by the Australian Brumby Alliance Inc. 2010

PREAMBLE

The Purpose of these Notes

These notes are designed to assist new Wild Horse re-homing Organisations with **check lists and ideas to consider** when setting-up. These ideas do NOT claim to cover all issues & should be supplemented by follow-up research and the seeking of other professional and legal advice where required.

Always ensure that the welfare of the horses comes first. This includes considering the option of humane culling where illness, starvation or no other viable rescue alternative is left available.

This booklet has been put together after discussion with existing Wild Horse & Heritage Brumby rescue & re-homing charities/organisations currently operating in NSW, Victoria & WA. Please note individual areas and individual horse groups sometimes require different approaches, hence the variety of information available in this booklet.



This booklet contains information on:

Section 1 Setting-up a Wild Horse Re-Homing Organisation

Section 2 Undertaking a Rescue

Help Notes Trapping & Trucking notes
Wild Horse handling notes
Care of your Adopted Brumby notes
Grant funding Sources

Please remember with regard to care and handling notes that every organisation and every trainer may do things differently depending on their experience, individual horse requirements, techniques available, etc. Choose methods that best suit **your** organisation, your horses and your situation.

Section One ~

Setting up a Wild Horse/Heritage Brumby Re-homing Organisation

1. Find enough interested persons dedicated enough, knowledgeable enough, financial enough and with enough time to form a Steering Committee!
2. Before incorporation the Steering Committee must have it's first official meeting, with properly set out meeting minutes, and elect Office Bearers. President, Secretary, Treasurer, some states require a Public Officer, some states may also require early appointment of an Auditor. At this meeting, discuss point 4 – preliminary sorting out of a Constitution. Again, ensure meeting minutes are properly taken and motions recorded.
3. At this point all members of the Steering Committee will probably have to put money into the kitty to fund the next few steps, if no funding is available from elsewhere.
4. Most Corporate Affairs Departments will have a pro-forma Constitution suitable for non-profit organisations which can be adapted to suit the group. Create a PRACTICAL, LEGALLY ACCEPTABLE Constitution. Don't just use the pro-forma one to start with and think about getting around to fixing it later. This is difficult and a lot of work and co-ordination. Get it right the first time.

*(For example, does the group just want to be a rescue society, or does it want to register the horses it rescues within a breed society? Do you need provision for email meetings as well as in-person meetings? Aims and objectives as a rescue society? **ALL** of this must be clearly defined in the Constitution. Currently not all non-profit organisations require auditing but this may change in future. If you are not operating according to your Constitution, there are legal ramifications.)*

5. Second/next meeting of Steering Committee – have a resolution to accept the draft Constitution, and...

Insurance – basic insurance requirement is Public Liability between 10 – 20 million cover to protect individual members of the organisation. **Note** : PL cover does not necessarily cover you for horse riding or training or some rescue operations – you must identify **EXACTLY** what you will need cover for and then talk to various insurance providers to see who can provide the best cover. (Not cheap!)

6. Form an Association – name the group and get it incorporated under the relevant state's Associations Incorporation Act. (Search the internet.) Submit Constitution at the same time.
7. Set up a bank account for the non-profit organisation – this may only be able to be finalised after the group becomes an incorporated body. Choose signatories – minimum two or according to state requirements. Setting up internet banking is a great idea when members live far apart – if this is the case, more signatories may be required.
8. Have a another meeting once incorporation status is achieved...look at setting up the following;
 - o Logo
 - o Letterhead
 - o Membership Forms
 - o Other general business forms

- Apply to Australian Tax Office for registration as a non-profit organisation for taxation purposes.
 - Look at whether or not you should apply for registration as a Deductible Gift Recipient status charity. (DGR status.) There are "fors" and "against" involved – look at the group's individual circumstances. Will it benefit?
 - Look at applying for an ABN (recommended)...and whether the group wishes to register (or not) for GST. Non-profit organisations are usually GST free.
 - Look at press release to announce your existence. A copy of some sort of one page explanation of who you are and what you hope to achieve can be distributed locally and also to those government departments in your own state that you may be dealing with.
 - Network and get a list of contacts together. State government authorities, RSPCA contacts, Animal Welfare contacts, etc.
9. Work on increasing membership base. Look at website development and how to finance the organisation. Start to look at seeking Corporate Sponsorship or grant funding applications.
10. Affiliate with a National body if possible. This provides additional networking and MUCH support and free advice. Can also result in governments talking to the National body about state issues that the state group may wish to raise.
11. Start a Rescue Database. Source infrastructure – what will you need? A truck? Trailer? Property to house horses, etc.
12. Get a Rescue Team together – endeavour to employ the services of a vet who can accompany rescues or at the very least vet check every single horse rescued as soon as possible.
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HELP NOTES...

See the separate PDF documents :

- Application for Endorsement as a Tax Concession Charity
- Instructions for completing Charity Status application
- Application for Endorsement as Deductible Gift Recipient
- Instructions for completing DGR application

Section Two ~ Undertaking A Rescue



**“Saving horses is not about saving horses, it’s about managing people.”
(Dr Sheila Greenwell, 2006)**

Heritage Horse Origins

Wild horses on Government/private land originated from domestic horses that escaped or were released long ago and by survival of the fittest have evolved into hardy, intelligent blood lines.

Authorities responsible for over populated wild horse areas should be encouraged to use humane management programs, including infertility programs.

Where wild horses are clearly in danger of being culled or dying of environmental threat such as drought, they should be assessed for potential re-homing.

Re-homing Wild Horses takes time, dedication, skill and emotional strain but the results can be very rewarding. If you assess the Wild Horse’s cull threat as critical, and feel it appropriate to begin a re-homing process, read on.

Always communicate openly and honestly with all parties involved. Endeavour never to put anyone standing between your group and the horses you may need to rescue offside. Be organised, professional and do things properly. Try not to take things personally. Do not force your beliefs onto others. Always remember that the horse’s welfare comes first.

RESCUE TO DO LIST

1. Contact the Relevant Government Authority

- Identify the Authority/Owner responsible for the area containing the Wild Horses. *Make sure you get your facts straight.*
- Establish healthy, polite dialogue about re-homing procedures with the relevant Authority Officer.
- Clarify the Authorities plan for these horses, and how you can assist with their future care.
- If necessary, contact your relevant RSPCA Office and establish ongoing liaison re: animal welfare.

2. Establish A Viable Action Plan

Be clear as a group about your goals and aims – make sure you understand what you can realistically achieve. Before you start ensure that you can take a rescue from beginning to end – that you have places for the horses to go in the longer term.

Work out how many horses you can rescue, how you will choose them, and how you will deal with those left behind, where necessary. Not every horse can be saved.

If you know the area the horses are running in, and you can get permission or you are able, a recon trip is a good idea. Find out where the horses drink, how many mobs, other animals, etc. Again, *get the facts!*

Ensure you have the funds to undertake any rescue before you start.

3. Trapping

- Establish your options - helicopter/ground mustering, passive trapping, lure horses with food or water, how?
- Passive trapping is preferred as stress/negative human experience is minimised.
- Identify who will do the trapping; Parks, separate contractor or your group.
- Get as much information as possible on the various techniques and how to undertake them. Contact experienced groups. For example, if you muster, stallions cannot be run as far as mares, and mares and foals can only be run for a certain distance before they MUST be rested or they will die.

4. Transport

- Who will transport horses to charity? Costs involved? Distance?
- HOW are the trapped horses to be safely loaded?
- Do stops for food and water have to be organised? Yards hired along the way?
- Do authorities have to be notified? (Bearing in mind it's illegal to transport unbranded horses anywhere in most states except to abattoirs.)

5. Horse Groups (Mobs)

- Where possible transport one mob of horses (ie family group) together.
- Wild horses are herd orientated and easily fret/stress if isolated from other horses.
- Do not put large groups together.
- Separate herd stallions where possible – from other herd stallions.

6. Destination

- Are there yards sufficient to hold wild horses? Are they safe yards with room for movement, areas for stallions to go, etc?
- Is the road in to the unloading area accessible for the truck hired/used?
- Do the yards have access to small, well fenced paddocks? Electric fencing? (Bearing in mind some wild horses will never have experienced fencing and CANNOT be released into a large paddock unless familiar with fencing. If they get up speed and gallop they can go straight through fences.)

- Do you have a crush or equivalent to handle any sick horses? A good round yard for training?
- Water supply - sufficient water to each area?
- Storage Shed/s – Weatherproof, secure, delivery access ie. feed, equipment, etc.

7. Track Each Horse (Keep the following records)

- Arrival date
- Photograph EACH horse on arrival (shows condition & horse identity on arrival)
- Location horse came from
- Identifying marks & any injuries, etc.
- Decide whether to freeze brand, Microchip, hair sample for DNA testing, etc. once horses are tamed – or will you let new owners do this?
- Record key Progress Stages for each horse, and other comments as needed.
- Date horse sold, to whom, f/u care, ongoing monitoring, etc.
- When a horse is passed on to it's new owner, ensure that EVERY new owner received a copy of care notes and relevant vet notes – ie. worming dates, trimming dates, etc.

8. Identify Volunteers from your group for;

- Trapping (if necessary – only if experienced and INSURED),
- Collecting horses,
- Ground handling, adjusting to human contact, basic handling techniques etc.
- To assist a vet in gelding,
- Property maintenance, etc.

9. Identify local services available, establish cost and does the group pay or do new owners pay?

- Vet (preferable equine specialist)
- Farrier
- Trainers

10. Organise Rehabilitation and Training Programs

- What 'Best Practice' techniques to use? (check with other groups)
- Who to manage/be responsible for the rehabilitation/training program? Delegate!
- How to know when a previously wild horse is ready to be re-homed?
- How to work out the cost of each horse (How to break even on costs to rescue, rehabilitate, train, feed, geld, advertise etc, plus variables such as vet bills etc.)?
- How to advertise horse sales - web, open day, sponsorship, horse/local news etc?
- How to attract the right person to buy the horse, and assess they are suitable?
- What requirements do people need to buy/adopt a horse?

- How do you ensure potential homes are 'good' homes and ensure successful placement?
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For further advice and information contact:

NSW

Save the Brumbies

Jan Carter
President
Ph: 02 6655 2224
www.savethebrumbies.org

Victoria

Victorian Brumby Association

Colleen O'Brien
President
Ph: 03 5345 1362 mob: 0408 201 107
www.victorianbrumbyassociation.org

WA

Outback Heritage Horse Association

Katherine Waddington
Secretary
Ph: 08 9756 0709
Email : wadifarm@bordnet.com.au (preferred)
Website <http://ohhawa.wildhorses-wa.com/>

Dr Sheila Greenwell

OHHAWA Veterinary Advisor/Rescue Team Leader
Email : sgreenwell1@optusnet.com.au
Ph: 0418 905 835

HELP NOTES

Passive Trapping of Wild Horses

Every state in Australia is different when it comes to environmental conditions, distance, etc. where wild horses are involved. Each wild horse rescue group will have to establish what works best for it with regard to trapping and transport of at risk wild horses/heritage brumbies.

Introduction

There are only a few options that provide for humane treatment of horses and that are practical, cost effective, environmentally sound, and meet legislative and policy requirements. *Guy Fawkes River National Parks document (2005)*

Trap Yards and Paddocks

Three horse capture techniques used in Guy Fawkes National Park (NSW). **(1)** Feed-based lures to attract horses; **(2)** use of coacher horses to encourage horses to enter the capture areas; & **(3)** low stress behavioural techniques for mustering horses into capture areas.

The optimal trap paddock size was found to be approximately 16 hectares (40 acres) and contained a small amount of natural shelter. Along with yards that allowed for separation of horse groups (mobs) while awaiting transport.

Trip gate entries were found most effective, provided special care is taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of foals within trap yards. Trap yards were most effective when:

- used in conjunction with lures;
- linked with trap paddocks;
- located in areas where a number of horse territories overlap;
- located in a sheltered area;
- yards are of adequate size to minimize social conflict when horses are confined (at least 30 panels); and
- used in conjunction with manually operated or remote trip gates are used to enclose horses.

Trapping using lures

Salt was the most effective lure, but ONLY for the first few days of contact. Hay was the second most effective feed-based lure, with molasses being slow to attract horses but effective once horses were established. Feed-based lures were effective in attracting horses from inaccessible areas and attracting horses into trap paddocks.

In WA, salt, molasses and hay have been found to be ineffective in luring wild horses, due to the horse's reluctance to taste something they don't know and also because salt is more common in the environment in some areas. Again, lure effectiveness varies between states.

Trapping using coacher horses

Three horses were selected from wild herds and educated to accept human contact and hand feeding in the yards. The horses were then released to rejoin wild herds wearing radio collars. Coacher horses were useful to:

- bring wild horses from trap paddocks into trap yards;
- bring stray individuals back to captured herds;
- teach wild horses to accept feed and human contact with a minimum of stress; and
- assist in loading horses onto transport.

Trapping horses using low stress behavioural techniques

- Study a detailed map of area horses are to be trapped/transported from
- Helicopter mustering (low stress techniques) was effective in inaccessible areas.
- Ground mustering using the low stress principles was effective in manoeuvring horses into trap paddocks and in educating horses once contained in trap yards.

Trapping Recommendations

- The most effective method was the combination of a trap paddock linked to steel yards with multiple holding pens.
- Feed-based lures and 'coacher' horses greatly assisted capture success.
- Once captured, horses required approximately 4 to 5 hours of humanisation to prepare them for transportation.
- A modified horse crate fixed to a 4WD truck was used to transport horses from a remote capture site to the transfer point. (*Remember methods vary according to location and state-to-state.*)
- A commercial 2WD stock transporter was used to transport horses from the area of trapping to the re-homing charity/organisation's property.

Capture & Removal of Wild Horses from a National Park (NP) - Require the Contractor to:

- Provide evidence of skills/experience in the humane capture/handling of horses;
- Comply with state legislative provisions relating to care, capture and transport of horses, including the (eg) Code of Practice for the Capture and Transport of Feral horses (English 2001b); and other local requirements.
- Comply with NP requirements & other state government department guidelines as required.
- Minimise environmental impact at capture sites; and
- Record and report to the NP any capture and removal operations, including;
 - Record of all horses removed, including sex, colour and age;
 - Horse Identification Record Form for EACH individual horse captured;
 - Numbers & locations of horses sighted;
 - Record of daily activity at feed stations and trap sites; and
 - Advice on any accidents or injuries to any horse or riders/trappers.

Note: National Parks may provide assistance & material where specific traps and fencing structures need to be constructed. Assistance types/materials must be specified in any contract.

Infrastructure to Trap, Load & Transport Wild Horses

- Truck hire – Correct type for horse numbers to transport, fuel required & costs.
- Dividable truck with suitable divide panels – is essential if foals are involved, never transport vastly different sized horses, such as foals & adults, together.
- Trap design - Consider using portable panels or build temporary yards at the site.
- Equipment – Consider needs for Portable crush, long poles to move horses about, ropes, halters etc?
- Trap area water supply – is there a local supply or must water be transported in, if so how, water container type/s and how to ensure a continued water supply?
- Horse feed - have sufficient hay to cover trapping/loading and trucking process.
- *Allow for unforeseen delays;* ie. Sufficient time for horses to remain on site while they are taught to load and be trucked out.
- Personnel - sufficient food, water, shelter, communication & first aid equipment.
- *Euthanasia* – every horse rescue operation must have access to - or a member with - skill/equipment, to put a horse down humanely in the event you find an injured horse, or an injury occurs. Check with local vets, organisations listed in this document, RSPCA or web for advice on how to euthanase a horse humanely.

Remember, not all horses can be saved and suffering or long and stressful veterinary treatment can be far crueller than a bullet.

Horse selection IF you cannot collect all horses...

Consider issues such as confirmation, health, age & temperament. Be aware that mature stallions, older mares and horses that display (even fear based) aggressive behaviour can be financially, emotionally, ethically challenging & draining. Consider carefully whether to bring back heavily pregnant mares or orphaned foals unless you can transport them safely & have facilities/finances to cope. DO NOT “skimp” on the rehab/training process due to bringing back excessive numbers or mature/critically ill horses that will adversely impact on the charity’s reputation and re-homing success stories.

Clarifying Responsibilities

- When does the charity take over responsibility for the horses’ welfare and maintenance if there is a contractor involved?
- Consider whether horses should be branded before the charity sells them on.
- Check all National Park requirements for re-homing, such as not being located on lands that adjoin or are in close proximity to National Park the horse came from.
- Clarify the charity/re-homed owner’s responsibility for paying the cost to retrieve any horse subsequently found to have returned to state government land.
- Make available for inspection by the NPs and RSPCA any sites where horses will be retained by the re-homing charity.

***Foot note regarding the Guy Fawkes National Parks Trial
(Conducted Apr-Oct 2005)***

Trial Results

- Horses can be trapped effectively in both steel yards and trap paddocks.
 - Of the eight month trial, 19 horse mobs (114 horses) were captured.
 - No horses were injured during the capture phase. One horse was euthanased on site from prior injuries & one horse died during loading.
 - The program was Supervised by the RSPCA and reported as a success.
 - 90% of 114 horses received by the re-homing charity during the trial were sold or retained for breeding, and were eligible to be registered as Guy Fawkes Heritage Horses.
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Resources

For further information on the trials & experienced gained by the **“Guy Fawkes River National Park Horse Management Plan”** contact: The Manager, Dorrigo Plateau Area, PO Box 170, Dorrigo NSW 2453 ph: 02 6657 23

For further information about re-homing charities who travel long distances to trap, load and transport home wild heritage horses in remote locations without the use of contractors, contact the **Outback Heritage Horse Association of Western Australia Inc (OHHAWA)** via the website <http://ohhawa.wildhorses-wa.com/>, or the Secretary Katherine Waddington (08) 9756 0709, or Dr Shelia Greenwell, the charity's Veterinary Advisor and Rescue Team Coordinator, on mobile 0418 905 835.

HELP NOTES

Wild Horse Handling ~ The Initial Stages



CARE & HANDLING OF NEWLY ACQUIRED HERITAGE HORSES

Please note the following guidelines are just that – guidelines only. Although they have been written from experience and are offered freely with the best of intentions, professional advice and assistance should always be sought on any equine medical or other matter if you have any concerns. Every horse is individual in its needs and your horse's welfare should always come first.

Introduction

Many of today's heritage horses/old bloodline horses as recognised and defined by the Outback Heritage Horse Association of WA (OHHAWA), have been obtained directly from at risk groups of horses located in remote station areas where they have remained in virtual genetic isolation since the days when they were bred and used as working horses (e.g. stock horses), were released, and escaped subsequent capture or destruction.

These descendants of those original horses are therefore those least likely to have been subject to any modern or introduced breed influence. In days past some of these horses met the requirement for military use and export, and in some cases were specifically bred for that market. They are influenced by the best imported "old blood" horses of breeds proven to withstand the harsh conditions of the new Colony, and have been subjected to severe natural selection pressures since those days.

As a result they possess some unique qualities which would be impossible to reproduce today. Along with these qualities comes the need to recognise certain evolved characteristics which require consideration and initial knowledgeable care.

Handling

Heritage horses rescued from outback stations are wild, perceptive creatures. They possess a well developed sense of self preservation, and as a result are exceptionally sensitive to their environment and any perceived threats. They are not inherently aggressive or flighty, but rather possess a strong herd instinct and are protective of their "family". They may be initially shy of humans, or of species with which they are unfamiliar.

On the other hand, if they have had no bad experiences with the unfamiliar, they can also be very forward and curious – much more so than other breeds. This should be encouraged and rewarded with kind words and touch if possible.

Training times with all horses vary. "It takes as long as it takes" depending on each individual horse's nature and background.

The recommended approach is to recognise the horse's natural sensitivity, be perceptive to the horse's natural reactions and responses and work *within* the animal's

ability for tolerance. The key is to achieve the horse's co-operation and respect through mutual trust, understanding and *patience* – small lessons each day - *not* by restraint, force, prolonged pressure or by expecting the horse to comply with demands which it does not understand or cannot tolerate. Whilst this would seem common sense and true for any horse, experience has taught us that heritage horses are often difficult to “bring back” if their developing trust is betrayed in the early stages.

Once trust in people and particularly in the handler has been established, without any harmful association of emotion or injury during the process, heritage horses become remarkably tolerant and loyal.

Choose very carefully if considering the “professional training” option. There are some excellent Horse Starters and Educators around, but there are a lot of “cowboys” about. The OHHAWA are happy to recommend trainers in your area - just ask.

Feeding and Parasite Control

Over many generations, heritage horses have developed the ability to process large amounts of poor quality feed. Remarkably, they can also process large amounts of protein from such things as Cape Weed and Clover without undue side effects such as foundering. This physiological adaptation has developed from generations breeding in harsh conditions and a “feast or famine” situation. The adaptation appears to be inherent; *however* heritage horses *cannot* process rich man-made hard feed or already processed feed or supplements without careful introduction.

Therefore *do not* put your new horse straight on to rich hard feed, seaweed or other supplements, lucerne hay in large amounts or any other sort of rich or processed feed. Your horse will more than likely develop diarrhoea (or become constipated and colicky), and could become quite ill. A common sense approach to feeding is vital.

Note : it has been observed that some foals conceived in the bush are born with first and second incisors. This means that sometimes, in a newly domestic situation, “bush born” foals are thought to be older than they actually are and are therefore also fed incorrectly. If possible, have your horse aged by someone experienced with heritage horses.

As soon as practicable the horse should be wormed and treated for lice if required. Whilst in their natural desert environment these horses are normally worm free due to the low stocking rate and dry conditions, they readily acquire a worm burden in a domestic environment and have no natural resistance to same. Unfortunately they also have little tolerance for chemicals, so treatment, whilst desirable and necessary, must be performed with care. *Do not overdose or too regularly dose heritage horses for worms, etc.* or they may become ill with colic like symptoms. Always err on the side of caution when dosing during the first twelve months of your heritage horse's arrival.

Approach when horses first arrive is as follows –

- Start by keeping your horse in yards or a small, properly fenced holding paddock, preferably with electric fencing. Wild horses have to learn about barriers. In the bush, all the horizontal stuff parts when they run through it – it's only the vertical trees, etc. that do not. When they are first in yards and paddocks, they may attempt to run through solid barriers. Until they are settled, it is strongly advised not to put them in large paddocks or they will build up enough speed to run straight through a fence and possibly suffer serious or even fatal injury. Increase size of area they are in slowly, as your horse becomes tame and you can catch it without too much of a problem.

- Supply as much good quality pasture (grass) or meadow hay as is required for the horse to access whenever desired without allowing waste. You will find that often, to begin with, newly acquired heritage horses eat *much less* than a normal domestic horse. This is okay – for a heritage horse, less feed is *normal* to begin with. You will notice the increase in consumption of hay over a few weeks. As the hay consumption increases, you may wish to add other feed as indicated below, *slowly*.
- If the horse has not learned to drink out of a container (e.g. bowl, bucket, bath etc.) and there is no natural water source available (e.g. dam), put the hay around the container. Some horses will tip the water out of the container onto the ground in order to get a drink, or in hot weather in order to lie in and coat themselves in mud.
- Make available the **appropriate minerals**/salt lick for your area. If minerals, sprinkle over hay. Many rescued horses arrive in poor condition and are lacking in vitamins and minerals. Ensure they receive minerals in their diet as soon as possible, and *ensure that new owners are informed of the importance of vitamins and minerals, and well mineralised soils/pasture as well as standard hard feed*.
- If possible, slowly introduce Lucerne hay into the diet. About ¼ of the total hay available to start, probably 1/3 would be plenty from there onward. Beware of feeding lucerne off the ground, horses may ingest dirt/sand in an attempt to get the last leaf fragments. (Which may result in colic.)
- After a good week or so, introduce a handful or so of some “cold” grain mix (e.g. Microsweet Rider, Pegasus Liberty, etc.) by sprinkling on the hay. The idea of this is lay the foundation for future increase in feed if required or administration of certain medications (ie. butte mixed with feed), or whatever. *Oats and/or “hot feed” are not recommended for heritage horses*.

NOTE : Heritage/wild horses are naturally suspicious of any new feed and it may take a few days of watching domestic horses consuming similar feed, or sniffing the feed in the yards, before your heritage horse will try it. Be patient and only dole out new feed a little at a time, along with hay or grass which your horse will be happy to eat. The same applies for carrots and apples – if you must feed these, feed them to domestic horses in front of your heritage horse first. They will eventually try it if it appears to be appetising!

- If your horse is not already used to human presence or interaction use the feeding opportunity to quietly walk around it whilst it is eating, Sit with your horse, talk to him/her, and reduce its intolerance zone.
- Any drafting, unloading etc. of the horse should be done quietly also in order for it to understand where you wish it to go rather than be pushed in the required direction in fright – *just* enough pressure to indicate what is required.
- Inoculations for Tetanus and Strangles – particularly in south-west WA – are also recommended.

Other Important Points

- Toxic plants - when first introduced to a paddock so far from their place of origin, heritage horses will have little idea as to what local plants are disagreeable or dangerous, despite their natural ability to judge same. So until they learn (by trial and error – with associated risks) it may be worth putting them in with a sensible “local”, tame horse in the hope that it may learn from same.
- Socialisation – newly acquired fillies or wild mares will most often be dominant over tame mares and geldings. This is natural and nothing to be concerned about

because formerly wild horses are actually less likely to inflict serious damage on other horses due to the herd survival instinct. (ie. Their bark is worse than their bite!) *Be aware however* that they may try to exert this dominance by kicking through fences. Injuries can result. Match your heritage horse carefully with the horses in it's paddock and in neighbouring paddocks to begin with until all these "paddock games" are sorted out.

- Newly acquired colts should ideally be kept with geldings so that the larger, dominant (tame) gelding can keep the colt in check. This applies even when the colt is tamed.
- Heritage horses are neither fond of, nor fearful of, dogs. In fact a number of heritage horses have been known to chase and even try to attack any dogs who wander into their paddock. If you have dogs, as most of us do, introduce them to your new horse carefully and in a *controlled* manner. In particular be careful about allowing dogs around new foals as any mare – in particular formerly wild ones - will defend their young.
- "Dingo Time" – the first twenty-four hours of a new heritage foal's life is fraught with danger in the wild, until the foal can keep up with the herd. Owners of formerly wild mares will note that the mares are often *very* wary of allowing anybody or anything near their foal for the first day or so. This is natural and the wariness will pass. A daily feed for the mare at this time is a great incentive to trust again (and also helps the mare following foaling)!
- If hooves are correctly trimmed, barefoot is a great option for heritage horses. They have naturally iron hooves and, if correctly maintained, horseshoes are not required. Boots such as "Old Mac" boots, worn on the front feet only, are an option during winter when hooves are not as hard or when long rides on hard surfaces (such as bitumen) are planned.
- SAND COLIC – wild horses can be rescued from drought areas and already have picked up sand from their desperate search for food. If they go to sandy areas (when rehomed) and are greedy, they can also pick up sand when grazing. Be aware that sand colic can be a problem for rescued heritage horses. They can carry low grade sand colic for weeks without really showing many symptoms. Consult your vet or equine professional re an initial drenching and later preventative maintenance if you think it necessary. Because of the innate toughness of these horses, they sometimes don't show symptoms until they are very ill indeed.

Characteristics

Heritage Horses are by definition hardy (although this *does not* mean that they will tolerate neglect, particularly in the domestic situation), frugal (they still have to be fed), sensible (but not immune to mistreatment or oblivious to their natural instincts), and loyal (if their owner or handler deserves it).

They are correct in conformation for soundness and for the type of work for which they were bred, although this is not always what is required for the show ring! One thing to note is that overall, most heritage horses have iron hooves, big sloping shoulders (even in smaller horses), gentle, wide set eyes and very big barrels. Due to large barrels and big shoulders, this means that often times, young heritage horses can look very disproportionate, in some cases like they are carrying a "worm burden". Rest assured this is just their "homely" phase and they *will* grow into their bodies.

Heritage horses are slow to mature – emotionally as well as physically. Give their bones time to grow and set. It is recommended that you do not ride your heritage horse hard

or regularly until it is at least 4 – 5 years old, although getting it used to a saddle and ponying it out, etc. at a younger age is a good idea.



At left, a healthy "ugly duckling" heritage horse colt as a disproportionate yearling (belly & barrel look way too big), at right, the same young stallion at five years of age, escorting rescued mares, having fully grown into his body.

A heritage horse is a hardy, intelligent, affectionate, loyal and long lasting companion and in the right hands will never look back. Nor will their owners!

OHHAWA Contacts

Email : wadifarm@bordnet.com.au (Secretary)

Wild Horse Handling ~ Taming/Training Ideas

References : Advice taken from Save The Brumbies (J Carter), Victorian Brumby Association (C O'Brien), OHHAWA (KJ & KA Waddington)

Learning about Fences

Be cautious of putting horses under pressure against fences until they realise a fence is designed to be a 'boundary' they must stay within. One way is to have a large enough paddock for them to acclimatise to then entice them into more confined areas. If space is limited, keep them in high fence yards to adjust to human presence & yard boundaries.

Class Numbers

Select a few horses at a time, so that you can rotate the 'lessons' each day and avoid one horse becoming stale. Working with several horses daily will help identify what seems to work best, and trial alternative techniques each horse may require.

Hands on

Feed hay each day to start gaining trust. After giving the horses a few days to settle in begin regular sessions. Daily hay feeds, getting closer each day. Wild horses class humans as predator because their eyes are in front, not to mention having caught them. So it often helps to not look directly at the horse as you work with them. Then gradually move to direct eye contact, depending on the horses ability to cope.

When the horses stop seeing the handler as a 'predator', their natural inquisitiveness takes over. Enjoy watching them learn for example how to eat hay from a wheelbarrow, see the 'Brumby Crouch' as they oscillate between curiosity & flight.

When the horse is eating out of your hand, in a small yard, gradually introduce them to a long stick. Start on the main body, working up to face contact last. The long stick will

reduce human smell and give the handler a safety margin. Progress to hand contact, again from main body area, ending with face contact.

Vet assistance – Gelding etc

Ensure the horse is ready for intensive, close attention, and to be handled by an unfamiliar person.

Ground Handling

Ensure the horse can achieve the actions of, being caught, halter-lead, picking up hooves, feet trimming, loading unloading from a float, worming, tolerant of car/motorbike etc.

Under saddle

Decide if the horse will be sold saddle-trained or not. Some people prefer to train their own horse, some pay an expert to do the job, some may only want the horse as a non riding companion. The longer a horse is kept the more costly for the charity, so work out the best options for your organisation.

Care of your Adopted Brumby

Notes produced by Save The Brumbies (STB)

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Congratulations on choosing a brumby; we hope you and your horse share many happy and useful years together.

We have cared for your horse from the point of capture, transport from a National Park, basic handling and introduction to his new life. Horses like to be around people and brumbies bond closely with their owner, in the wild the herd instinct is very strong, it needs to be, for their survival; now you have become your horse's leader in every way and if you follow a few simple rules your pleasure will increase immensely.

Always **give your horse time to think** when you ask for something, when he chews his lips that shows he's in thinking mode so give him time to work out what you want of him. When you first get your brumby home remember it is all very strange to him so don't crowd his space, let him settle and find his own way around his new surroundings. Make sure he has a friendly and non aggressive companion horse to help him adjust and make him feel at home. He will follow that horse's lead; brumbies are very intelligent, more so, we have found, than domestic horses and they learn very quickly. **Observe your horse** in the paddock, tune in to his body language, he will teach you too, and show you how he is feeling so learn to read his signs as he learns to read yours. Never force him to do something; that is a negative way of training. If you feel frustrated and things are not going as you would wish; retreat, settle yourself down, wait a while and then try again. Horses are very forgiving of your mistakes so be prepared to be forgiving for his too.

We recommend that you have a **small round yard** or similar for ongoing handling in the beginning. Feed your horse in the yard, let him come and go freely; he will soon learn to be comfortable and safe as it becomes his special place. **If he is shy** approach him quietly from his near side shoulder and avoid direct eye contact with him; if he backs away, stand still, don't look at him, wait and then try again. When you are near him, read his signs, if he seems nervous take the pressure away and retreat again. This approach and retreat method builds his confidence and is not threatening. Never

chase him; this simply does not work and only frightens him. Remember, he is a prey animal and sees you, in the beginning, as his predator, teach him to see you as his friend.

Keep your **training sessions short**, no more than 15 to 20 minutes at a time, that way he doesn't become confused with too much, too soon. Do not attempt to tie him up until he is confident and relaxed; we teach this using baling twine which breaks easily if he does get a fright and pulls back and we start this when he is eating his feed.

Horses love to hear you **talk to them**. Keep your voice low and inviting; he will quickly recognize your voice from others and respond accordingly. Food rewards are a good way to his heart but don't overdo it; you don't want him to become pushy and greedy. Horses are like children, each one learns at a different pace; this doesn't mean your horse is different or difficult; it only shows his own unique personality. Some horses progress quicker than others but we have found that all, without exception, given the right handling, become superb horses.

If your horse is just **being a pest** and downright naughty, and some quickly learn how to avoid things they don't particularly like, the best method is to ignore him, send him away from you; horses are inquisitive and like to be noticed, this will hurt his pride and make him think twice. Always reward him when he behaves and reinforce the positive.

Remember, he is your horse and you are the best judge in his welfare. Even inexperienced people can achieve wonders by simply being with their horse and spending a lot of time with them. Try to spend as much time as you can on a regular basis with your horse. There are many 'how to do' horse books on the market, read them but choose your own path, you know your horse best, not the writers of the books.

FEEDING AND GENERAL CARE OF YOUR BRUMBY

Your horse doesn't need a stable but he does need some shelter from the weather. Make sure his paddock has shady trees and somewhere he can get out of the wind. He should always have free access to clean water, if using a trough make sure you keep it clean and well filled at all times. Fresh, good **grass is the best** food you can supply. This is the horse's natural diet and unless he is in regular work that is all he should need. You will need to supplement with good quality hay during winter months and to encourage him, some hay after his lessons goes a long way to establishing a good relationship with him. We don't recommend grain or hard feed. He has been used to grass vegetation only; changing his diet could result in stomach upsets and colic.

Rugging is a matter of personal choice; we do find however, that wearing a rug has benefits, not so much as to keep his coat looking good but the actual putting on and taking off helps him adjust to having his hind legs touched frequently and having things over his back. If rugging, you will need to check him daily to make sure he doesn't get caught up in a fence or has it hanging around his neck in tatters. Being able to handle him and yard him as needed is essential for his wellbeing, particularly if you need to have him checked by your vet. Taking care of your brumby is really no different than any other horse; the more attention you give him the more pleasure you will receive in return.

Finally, common sense rules, make sure his paddock is **clear of debris**, bad fences and things he can hurt himself on. Even so, accidents can, and do happen, that's why it's important that you manage him with confidence. And he does need a companion horse; a solo horse is dejected, depressed and unhappy so give him a mate of his own kind.

We are always happy to help with advice if needed; we get very attached to the brumbies during their stay with us and find it hard to say good-bye. Please keep in touch with us; let us know how your horse progresses; we thank you for choosing a brumby; supporting our work and giving a horse a chance for a happy and contented life. A brumby is special, he will always have that something extra he was born with, that contact with the essence of nature and it is our privilege to share our life with him.



FUNDING SOURCES

Supporting Wild Horse re-homing Charities

Community grants – local governments/Shire can sometimes assist

Business Community Grants

Capitol Grant (Major expenditure)

Seed funding – assist establishment phase

www.philanthropy.org.au

Other Grant Funding – search the internet...there is usually a form of Grants Directory issued annually in each state which outlays almost all available grants

Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR)

To check is an if an organisation has DGR status view www.abr.gov.au

For endorsement as a DGR see Tax Office website

For further advice and information contact :

NSW

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