

Brumby Bridges



The quarterly newsletter of the ABA
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Fertility Control: understanding the slow pace

Although it seemed a good idea in December to start the Brumby Bridges New Year off with a comprehensive analysis of various wild horse fertility control initiatives in Australia and other countries, it soon became obvious that the subject is more complex than imagined.

If fertility control to maintain sustainable numbers in wilderness areas is preferable to culling, why is the development of relevant programs such a slow process?

From the little snooping I have done, I suppose it boils down to a mixture of available funding and apathy. And it seems that Australia's progress is on a par with that of other nations. I will do my bit to raise the profile by including noteworthy available information in Brumby Bridges.

Meanwhile, seeing it would not be wise to hold my breath until any developments come along, I join with other interested ABA supporters in monitoring and advocating the efforts of the researchers who are 'on the

job' in Australia at present. One example is the Charles Sturt University's manure sampling project, which may prove to be a tiny step towards determining the effectiveness of a future Brumby fertility vaccine.

Then there are the initial developments of the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IA-CRC), which hopes to develop a single-dose treatment for Brumbies (and kangaroos). The recent confirmation of its access to five more years of government funding to continue its work is a positive step.

Jill Pickering's President's Chat on Page 3 provides details of these two avenues.

There appears little more to say on fertility control at present than to encourage ABA supporters to continue supporting it in all ways possible.

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A national body for the recognition, management, preservation and welfare of Australian wild horses (Brumbies)

Newsletter Contributions

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ATHRA national trail ride funds distribution

Below are some examples of how the funds raised by last year's national trail ride hosted by the Australian Trail Horse Riders Association (ATHRA) were used by the six ABA member organisations that lodged bids:

The gelding of wild rescued colts is an essential service provided by the Outback Heritage Horse Association of Western Australia (OHHAWA) so that they can be easily matched to good owners after they are trained. Even though the vets the OHHAWA use charge reduced rates, the total cost of gelding of Basil and Spencer, that were rescued from the Lake Muir area, was \$680.00. Having raised \$300.00, the Committee applied for the balance - and received it.

Wies Roberts of the Coffin Bay Brumby Preservation Society (CBBPS) reports that its new portable yard panels have arrived and have been put to good use already. The



CBBPS gratefully assures everyone concerned that they will make Brumby handling much easier than it has been. And will do so for many years to come.

Yet another example is acknowledged in the HVBA report on Page 6. For the other examples, see www.attha.com.au

National Events Calendar - February and March 2012

17-19 February – Seymour Alternative Farming Expo. The Victorian Brumby Association will have a stall plus Brumbies. Seymour Showgrounds. Victoria

26 February – Introduction to Bitless Riding – Hosted by the Victorian Brumby Association. Come along, try out different kinds of bitless bridles in a safe environment. Brumbys Run, 213 Lexton Road, Beaufort. Victoria. <http://victorianbrumbyassociation.org>

28 February – RSPCA's 2012 Scientific Seminar. Canberra. See the link: <http://www.rspca.org.au/what-we-do/science-and-policies/science-seminars.html>

18 March – Brumby Spotting Tour – Hosted by SEQ Brumby. Sunshine Coast Queensland. <http://www.seqbrumby.com>

23-24 March – Upper Hunter Show. Muswellbrook – For the first time ever, registered Brumbies will be competing at Muswellbrook! The Hunter Valley Brumby (HVBA) Association is thrilled to be able to showcase Brumbies in the Upper Hunter. Please come along and show your support. The HVBA will be sponsoring some great prize money and will have an info and merchandise stand! Muswellbrook Showgrounds. New South Wales. <http://www.upperhuntershow.com.au/>

President's Chat

National Brumby Week

We changed the Spring Brumby Week to a possible Autumn one because of staff illnesses and weather issues. While the concept of a Brumby Week remains a positive one, we are asking whether members will be in a position this Autumn to organise the event.

If enough people are interested, we will need to move soon; if not, we will defer to 2013.

Carnarvon National Park (CNP)

Since the joint meeting in Brisbane with the Department of Environment and Resource Management personnel (DERM) on 6 September last year, there has been slow progress on starting a Brumby Trap for Rehoming trial in Clement National Park, as a precursor to an expanded program in CNP.

Mark Hoffman, a local horseman who knows CNP well, informs me that local DERM staff have forwarded the Brisbane office details of what he could offer the trial.

We now wait for Clive Cook (DERM) to decide if a tender process is needed for the trial. Seeing previous tenders were unsuccessful, we hope Mark can begin the work without waiting for a tender process to conclude.

Research

A report on Charles Sturt University's manure sampling for the testing of progesterone concentrations in Brumby mares and stallions is nearing finalization. This year a student is starting a PhD on methods used to successfully domesticate and rehome Brumbies, with the aim of producing a document describing successful methods.

Also, the Invasive Animals CRC in Canberra has successfully obtained the much needed funds to extend their programs to 2017. The ABA, having supported the extension, will be

able to advise when trials in the wild are developed late in this period.

NSW Parks Regional Pest Management draft strategy review

The document concerned is available on www.environment.nsw.gov.au

I assume members in NSW have prepared - or are preparing - their responses to issues relevant to their particular regions.

Parks Victoria went through a long consultative process not long ago, so it is vital that we all contribute to this feedback as each State reviews their Park Management plans over the next few years.

Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA)

Lesley Monro, our RDA Darwin contact, is negotiating receipt of a Brumby from a local property, and is very excited by the prospect of having another Brumby available for their riders.

Lesley and I are discussing other ways the ABA and the RDA could work together. More on this later.

New ABA brochures

How is this for timing?

On Australia Day, Genine of Genuine Print delivered 200 ABA brochures.

These brochures, like those the company produced last year, were generously printed without charge because Genine's Dad is passionate about Brumbies.

Thank you very much, 'Dad'!

Will groups please let me know how many copies they would like me to post out?

Jill Pickering

Overseas news: The Thai pony puzzle

About a year ago, when the NSW-based Thai ponies enthusiast Mike Wildman introduced Brumby Bridges readers to the perilous situation these stoic little animals face, I was so enchanted I not only wanted to support their cause but to see them first hand.

So what is so engaging about them? For me, it is not only the lingering mystery about whether they really are descendants of the primal Mongolian horses - or even Tibetan ones!; it is their extraordinary strength and their cross breeding jeopardy.

They have played a vital role in Thailand's history which, in its own way, is no less significant than that of the revered elephants. They certainly are the nation's heritage horses, as are the Brumbies of Australia!

Just as Thailand itself brims with contradictions - at least to many Western observers - its ponies seem an enigma in a landscape that varies from the peace of a hilltop Buddhist monastery to the hustle of urban traffic.

On an end-of-year stay in the kingdom's north-west, my illusion of horses living happily in the pristine setting of a Chiang Rai monastery was shattered. Certainly I knew that they carried monks on their morning visits to remote mountain villages but I did not know that they spent most of their time tethered.

Where was the freedom and majesty of the wild horse? It was trampled in the dust of the bamboo yards of their no-nonsense nursery, and the daily struggle of their minders to keep them fed - mainly on corn stalks.

The scene was not entirely lacklustre though; for example, one scruffy little fellow displayed some unusual eye and muzzle markings that seemed as though they had been painted on.

Overall though, the ponies seemed tired, and not only from their exertions. At the time I



could not understand why. Now I think they lack the emotional nourishment that simple expressions of appreciation would give them.

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The ponies that pull cartloads of people, tourists mainly, around the busy streets of Lampang did not seem repressed; rather, they seemed to go about their business with a have-to manner, at least when not dozing in the pony stations between jobs.

At one of these stations, the cross breeding threat hit home when I saw the motley line-up at the end of which a few tiny true Thai ponies were literally pushed aside by mixed breeds that were up to twice their size. An evolutionary chain perhaps? Nevertheless, the interlopers had the potential to tow more passengers at a time! And earn their owners more money!

The extinction threat is being challenged by the determination of the Lampang Pony Welfare Foundation (LPWF). As well as initiating DNA testing to explore the strain's origin, the LPWF runs a clinic in the town's back blocks. There, under the capable guidance of resident manager Nick, the vital tasks of horse user education and treatment are being addressed to the very limit of the available resources.

No repression there! In its place pure promise as depicted by the nobility of Khun Tong,* a



two-year-old primitive bay filly. Sam Law,* a seven-year-old stallion, shares that spark; his power rippled from his fuzzy forelock to the flick of his long tail. Yet, when Nick obligingly fetched him from his paddock, he in turn was co-operative enough to be lead from a motorbike.

This pair are the real thing, no doubt about it. They would, as an out-of-place T-shirt on a visitor to a temple declared, 'make good babies!' They haven't done so yet, but maybe sometime soon....

To learn more about the LPWF struggle, and to lend some support, take a look at www.lampangponywelfare.com

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Also on the subject of struggle, Mike, who recently explored the extreme north-eastern province of Ubon Ratchathani, reports finding "a very humble and knowledgeable lone operator" at Sirindhorn, Mr Shuchat Warapridi. Shuchat and his family are so committed to the cause of conserving the Thai pony that he retired early from school teaching to develop a four-hectare 'farm', and establish the Pony Preservation Club (in 1998).

The club's main objective is to perpetuate local breeds by acquiring relevant knowledge and maintaining records of experiences that members and others have of caring for the ponies. This is mainly for the sake of passing

vital information on to future generations of Thai people.

In order to exchange knowledge and provide broad-range support, Chuchat has joined a network of pony preservation groups based in other provinces, including Loei, Nakhon Nayok and Sa Kaew.

Sixty-five rescued, donated and home-bred ponies are scattered throughout Shuchat's property and neighbouring ones, at least in the daytime; each evening the ringing of a bell summons them home! And they fall in line like milking cows heading for the dairy.

At least four of them have received sponsorship by visiting foreigners, but many are in poor health despite his very best efforts.

Unfortunately, Suchat lacks the back-up that liaison with off-shore animal welfare entities could provide, so maybe this feature will at least offer some international recognition of the momentous undertaking involved.

Readers interested in lending their support - perhaps by sponsoring a pony - are welcome to ring the Pony Preservation Club on:

+66 (0)81 955 8369 or
+66 (0)89 584 5117

Greg Kidd
Editor

Hunter Valley Brumby Association (HVBA)

A very big Happy New Year to all of the Brumby rescue groups and ABA Members from the HVBA!

We have kicked off the new year with a new website: <http://www.hvba.com.au/>

We have put a lot of focus on the events that we do and the care and handling of our rescue Brumbies. So please check it out. Any feedback will be most welcome.

The HVBA team has been busy with continued training and care of our Kosi Brumbies from 2011, and preparations are underway for 2012 exhibits and shows. We are pleased to announce that the Muswellbrook Show committee has agreed to allow Brumby classes at this year's show (23 and 24 March).

This is very exciting as we have been trying to get Brumby classes in various shows in the upper Hunter area for over two years. We have promised Muswellbrook a great turn out, which will be supported by our information stand.

So, we ask any of the other groups that have adopted Brumbies into the area, to spread the word, we would greatly appreciate it. The bigger the turn out the better!

A very big thank you to the ABA for the donation of part of the ATHRA Worlds Biggest Trail Ride and Brumby Awareness Day proceeds. This donation allowed us to purchase a secondhand crush, which will be modified before winter to accommodate horses rather than cattle. This equipment is essential for the safe handling of Brumbies. No doubt our vet will be relieved too!

An article in the Newcastle Herald on 30 December sparked a lot of concern in the local community about a renewed push for aerial culling of Brumbies in the World Heritage listed Barrington Tops National Park



Sean and Kellie at Barrington Tops National Park

(approximately 200 kilometres north of Sydney, and a one-hour drive from Stroud). The Herald contacted me on 10 January with the view of doing a follow-up story that outlined the HVBA's position and the true evaluation of the future of Barrington Brumbies. It was published on 14 January, and it exceeded our expectations, even including an unbiased review of the National Parks and Wildlife Service's (NPWS) draft pest management strategy* as it applies to Barrington.

Unfortunately, this article is not available online, but the author was kind enough to email it to me, so I have been able to circulate it. We were very happy to be part of a well-written and researched article; and best yet, the accompanying photo of HVBA Southern Belle (a seventeen-month-old Kosi Brumby captured last August) was front page!

On 7 January, Kellie, our Vice President, and I went up to the Barrington Tops National Park. When we advised NPWS that we were heading up there, Officer Sean Thompson offered to take us on a guided tour!

We had a wonderful day, and also strengthened the good working relationship we have with the

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NPWS Gloucester office. Unfortunately, some undesirables, who had camped in the area the night before, had scared the Brumbies into thicker territory, but it gave us the opportunity further our own research, take lots of photos of 'damage' - with much more being done by the public than the Brumbies! And Sean was able to take us to areas that the public is not allowed to visit, and which the Brumbies most frequent. And I spent the day picking through lots of poo!

Kath Massey
President



Southern Belle and Kath

Editor's note:

The NPWS Draft Strategies, to which Kath refers above (and as ABA President Jill Pickering mentioned in her report on Page 2) are available for public comment until 29 February 2012. For more information, see:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/pestsweeds/RegionPestManagement.htm>

Brian Hampson Brumby Education Day

This well-attended day, which was held on 19 November, was a huge success. It was held at Helen Sorrenson's property at Palmwoods, with the insurance being covered by the Caboolture Trail Horse Club.

The day itself was organized by the inexhaustible Lorraine Decker, who had been on one of Brian's Brumby training clinics in the Northern Territory.

On that clinic, you train a Brumby to saddle within five days then ride it for five days in the desert. For more information on this clinic, visit Brian's website listed below.

A six-year-old stallion and a two-year-old colt were trained. The stallion was captured on 18 June, along with five other Brumbies, two of which may be his daughters.

He had been kept and handled by Dave Berman (who traps Brumbies for Forestry Plantation Queensland and delivers them to SE-QBA) and his daughter. They had hoped he

could be used as a show jumper; however, they did not have the time needed to train him. (Dave already has a Brumby on which he competes in show jumping at the national level.)

The stallion was a lot calmer and less difficult to handle than he would have been without the exposure to, and handling by, humans that he had had prior to the clinic. The colt had only been captured the week before and was very frightened.

At the end of the day, Brian had a saddle on the stallion and the colt was haltered.

The two Brumbies were auctioned, with Robert Abel purchasing the stallion for \$120, and Jacquelyn Watson the colt for only \$20 (with a free CD thrown in)!

I am sure that everyone who attended the day learned a lot, and perhaps gained a greater appreciation of the time that goes into training

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Brian Hampson Brumby Education Day cont'd

Brumbies to halter prior to their rehoming.

Anne Wilson
Secretary SEQBA

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Brian's personal site which contains info about the Brumby safaris:

· <http://www.thehoofman.com/>

and his hoof care services:

· <http://www.cthc.org.au/>

An article by Kiah Homan, SEQ Brumby Junior Representative - following up the October Brumby Bridges feature on her bond with Toolara Rex

My Not So Wild Brumby

Rex is a 14.3hh, beautiful bay Brumby that is about five years old. He was captured in the Toolara State Forest on the Sunshine Coast in November 2009, and was dropped off to my place about seven months later.

At first he seemed quiet, lazy and with no life in him. I wrote to Wrangler Jayne who said that I should probably just spend time getting to know him and play friendly games with him. So when I would arrive home from school, I would pat him then walk off and sit down a few feet away. He soon learned he could trust me enough to follow me. I spent hours just patting him and talking to him. He even puts up with me singing to him!

Our mutual trust deepened and I felt the true beauty of the Australian Brumby.

I love having Rex. He cheers me up and he knows he will get rewarded after a long session. He even gets to go swimming in the dam!

On 19 November 2011, I attended the Brian Hampson Brumby Education Day at Palmwoods. The two Brumbies he worked with came a long way in just one day. It made me appreciate that Rex is a wonderful horse and that we too have come a long way in such a short time.



Rex has taught me so many things and he continues to do so every day I am with him. I have learned what the true meanings of trust and bond are. They are things that can't be taught, but you know they are there through feel and love.

I am grateful to have a friend that has given me more than I can ever give him. He has even given me my own piece of Australian heritage.

Brumbies Downunder

For the interest of readers who may not be aware of it, The Horse Downunder Magazine's Summer edition includes a comprehensive Brumby article by Michelle Slater called From galloping through the wilderness. The article displays some excellent photographs by Amanda Gallagher – including shots of people (and Brumbies) involved with the ABA.

As well as being available at newsagencies, the magazine has an online subscription.



EQUINE ART EXHIBITION A GREAT SUCCESS

Following on from an exceptionally successful inaugural event in 2010, the Equine Art Exhibition - which opened on 3rd December 2011 in Bridgetown, with over 30 artworks entered - has once again been hailed a success. This year the event is running for two months, providing an even greater capacity to showcase artists from across the state - and interstate. The exhibit will run until 31 January 2012.

"We are raising awareness of our unique heritage wild horses through the artistic form and also promoting new and rural artists," said event organizer Elizabeth Dennis (Vice President of the OHHAWA Inc).

The event is open to artists of all ages and all mediums are accepted. "It is important that all upcoming artists have the opportunity to exhibit, regardless of age, experience and their preferred medium," continued Elizabeth "last year we had entrants as young as 7 and as senior as 70 and that is what made it such a terrific exhibition. This year the event has attracted nationally recognized as well as local artists and is certainly well worth viewing. We sold four works on the opening night alone, and works are continuing to sell."

The event is not officially judged due to the wide range of artistic expertise and mediums, however a \$500 "People's Choice" award will be offered for the piece that receives the highest number of votes from patrons who view the exhibit. The Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes sponsor the People's Choice Award.

The exhibit is once again being held at Bridgetown Pottery Gallery, 81 Hampton Street in Bridgetown. This year the event has been supported by the South West Development Commission. This support is seen as an indication of the value and quality of the event.

The event will conclude with a "spit roast Aussie style" dinner at the gallery restaurant, details of which will be announced. Anyone interested in attending the dinner should contact Secretary Katherine Waddington to register their interest.

The Outback Heritage Horse Association of WA is an incorporated Donor Gift Recipient charity dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of at-risk old bloodline horses in remote areas of Western Australia. It is run entirely by volunteers.