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Media Release 14 September 2013

The Australian Brumby Alliance is concerned at recent calls for aerial culling in the Victorian Alps, and especially sad to hear the RSPVA VIC, despite sitting on a committee chaired by Parks Victoria for almost a year where several other humane and best practise control methods have been discussed state that *aerial shooting when done under strict protocols by highly competent operators is the best for the horses welfare and goes on to say would be the most effective in the current situation in the eastern Alps where the country is rugged and large scale control is needed.*

Alternative options for the Alpine area currently exist. The ABA and National Parks & Wildlife Service (NSW) and Parks Victoria staff have developed highly successful and humane passive trapping programs, with Brumby rehoming groups having first option to collect, gentling and rehome Brumbies. The Victorian Brumby Association has, for example, rehomed over 350 Brumbies. The Australian Brumby Horse register authenticates and promotes Brumby classes and countless Brumby owners are proud to explain why owning a Brumby is so very special.

Secondly, the large scale control RSPCA Vic refer to, is reserved for the thousands shot in outback areas, while only 1,200 are proposed to be removed from the Alpine National Park. National Parks & Wildlife (NSW) staff remove around 600 Brumbies annually from the Kosciusko National Park by passive trapping in limited areas.

Why does RSPCA Vic not mention passive trapping, with rehoming options, as viable options to aerial shooting? Why does RSPCA Vic advise aerial shooting in rugged terrain when the very nature of Alpine terrain leaves aerial shooting highly unlikely to produce a clean kill and severely limits the essential ground back-up required to check every downed horse and kill the percentage still lying injured?

The shooters ability to maintain a consistent line of sight, essential to deliver a clean, humane kill, is severely challenged as Brumbies gallop over rocks, dodge trees and scale steep inclines. A "humane" kill is even more unlikely as the shooter attempts to compensate for up/down drafts impacting on the helicopter and the bullet's trajectory. RSPCA Vic needs to comprehend the difference between desert and Alpine aerial culling humaneness. Aerial shooting in the vast flat, open environments of the outback in WA, NT and SA cannot be transposed to hilly, treed, rocky terrain with steep gullies.

RSPCA NSW took the NSW government to court in 2000 over a botched aerial cull in the Guy Fawkes National Park where more than 600 Brumbies were shot from the air over a period of

days. Most of the Brumbies shot had multiple bullet wounds and it was conclusively proven that several Brumbies took up to thirteen days to die due to the difficulty of ground follow up in the rough, heavily treed terrain – terrain just like that in the Victorian High Country. As a result of this court action, aerial culling of Brumbies is banned in New South Wales.

The ABA calls on RSPCA Vic to join us and promote best practice management of our Australian Brumbies by recognising the reasons why aerial shooting in the Alpine terrain is inappropriate and accept other, realistic options already covered in the Alpine review.

For the RSPCA Vic to continue to promote aerial culling as the most humane option is at best naive and ill informed . Aerial culling has been proven inhumane – what will it take for RSPCA Victoria to stop defending the indefensible?



Jill Pickering,
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