

The AUSTRALIAN BRUMBY ALLIANCE Guide to Brumby rehoming



New England Brumby Sanctuary

This document is a guide only, it provides information to help create a successful and safe partnership between Australia's iconic Brumby and their new rehome.

The ABA encourages you to contact one of our reputable ABA member groups if you need more information. Contact details provided at the end of this document.

IN THE WILD

Brumbies are the descendants of horses who were brought to Australia by the early European settlers. Today, Brumbies live mostly in National Parks across NSW, VIC and in QLD, Brumbies are legally classified by the State they live in and their populations managed according to that State's legislation. Given Brumbies often move across State borders and can be trapped, removed then transported to rehoming organisations in other states, the lack of a nationally consistent approach can present challenges.

Brumbies have adapted to life in Australia during hundreds of years here, they have 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.

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

TRAPPING

In Australia, the most common method used by State agencies to catch Brumbies for rehoming is to trap them, leave them for a couple of days in the pen with water, then transport them directly to their new home. There are standard operating procedures which guide the trapping of pregnant mares or young foals, and regulations about transporting stallions, however, these are not always enforced.

No planning that goes into trapping entire family groups, instead it is the inquisitive Brumbies who are caught and removed while that family group remains in the area afterwards for the next trapping season, which adds to the trauma of the broken family group. The Brumby is then transported to their new home.



A Brumby runs out of a trap site set in NSW Kosciusko National Park. Photo credit: Michelle Brown

TRANSPORT

You will need appropriate transport for unhandled horses i.e. cattle trucks with loading ramp. You will also need a run with safe fencing to direct the Brumby into the transport truck safely and calmly, as well as calmly out of the truck once you arrive at your destination.

YARDS

Yards or small holding paddocks to download the Brumby that are easily accessible for the transport truck are preferred, especially if the truck can reverse into the yard and the Brumby safely leave the truck. It is important the yard for your Brumby is not large to allow them to build up speed and charge through the fence potentially causing serious injury. In the wild, the Brumbies run through bush and bracken, so they may try to run through the fence or test the boundaries, so ensure the fencing is safe, solid and secure.

Brumbies soon learn to respect fences and adjust to staying in a defined area.

The yard needs to be able to contain the newly arrived Brumby, it needs to be small so you can check for any injuries or health concerns, yet with enough space so they can move away from you if frightened. The Brumby may need to stay in this yard for a couple of days, so ensure that it is of appropriate size with access to food and water and some shelter where possible.

In addition, your Brumby has never been alone so will need the company of a reliable horse/s in a yard or paddock next to theirs, remove any fly screens or rugs first as this can be frightening for your Brumby.

Some examples of different Brumby rescue organisation fencing.



South East Queensland Brumby Rescue



Kaimanawa Heritage Horse Association (NZ)



Victorian Brumby Association

We have to be mindful of what the Brumby has recently been through. In the wild, Brumbies live in social groups known as bands, in these bands, the horses have close friends and family members. During the trapping process, Brumbies are separated from each other, which they find very distressing.

The trapping process uproots Brumbies from their home, so they are disorientated, then loaded onto trucks for many hours of travelling, which is terrifying, and forced to travel with horses unknown to them.

So, when the Brumby finally arrives to their new home, they are very distressed, disorientated and fearful of everything, they are also sleep deprived! Therefore, understanding what a Brumby needs from us will go a long way to help them and make it easier to settle into their new environment.

Now the Brumby is in our care it is our responsibility to make their transition into this new world as easy and as safe as possible for them.

FEED

Brumbies have adapted to their environmental conditions and have the ability to process large amounts of poor quality feed as well as high protein foods when it is abundant, this physiological adaptation has developed from 'feast or famine' survival technique. However, Brumbies cannot process rich man-made hard feed or supplements without careful introduction.

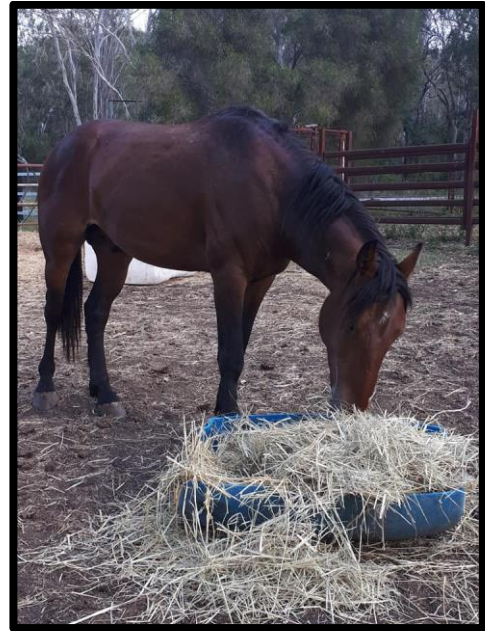
A carefully planned introduction to new feed is essential.

Supply as much good quality pasture (grass) as required for your Brumby to access whenever desired without allowing waste. You will find that to begin with, your Brumby will eat much less than a domestic horse, but over time, you will notice the increase in consumption of hay, probably in a couple of weeks, and accordingly, you may want to **slowly** introduce other feeds as well.

If possible, slowly introduce Lucerne hay into the diet, about ¼ of the total hay available to start. At first, a feed bowl will be viewed with suspicion but leave it there so they find in their own time.



HOOFS2010 Brumby Rescue



South East QLD Brumby Rescue

WATER

If your Brumby has not learned to drink out of a container, e.g. bowl, bucket, bath etc. and there is no natural water source available (dam), then put the hay around the container. Some Brumbies 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. **Check the water levels daily and multiple times per day during summer.**



Victorian Brumby Association

WORMING

Most Brumbies have a high worm burden, so a wormer can also be added to the feed, it will need to be added when your Brumby is happily eating the hard-feed or a suitable pour-on can be used.



Bluewater Brumbies Inc

MINERALS

Make available the appropriate minerals/salt lick for your area. Check with your local feed store or reputable Brumby rescue organisation for advice on what minerals are needed.

PEACE AND REST

Most important, the newly arrived Brumby needs to feel safe, it's all about self-preservation, in mind, body and soul. If they perceive they are threatened, their instincts will be to flee, fight or freeze, these are normal horse responses.

Your Brumby desperately needs to rest, to get some peace and be allowed to settle undisturbed with hay and water. At first, your Brumby may be reluctant to come near you so quietly put out the hay in the yard and leave them. When your Brumby is rested, slowly increase your time spent near them, either beside the yard or by standing in his yard at a safe distance.

The yard will need to be mucked out regularly, so enter with your rake and quietly do your work – or if you have an adjoining yard, let your Brumby through there until completed.



Victorian Brumby Association



New England Brumby Sanctuary

It is important when you are around your Brumby you keep your energy levels soft, your movements slow and smooth, be aware of your emotions and feeling, don't approach if you are really angry, sad or over-excited about something. The horse is very easily frightened, by sudden or unexpected movements.

Resist the urge to touch. Just allow your Brumby to become familiar with your calm presence. This will take as long as it takes, don't have any expectations, your Brumby will get there in their own time and be all the better for it. It won't take long until they look forward to seeing you.

GETTING YOUR HORSE OUT OF THE YARD

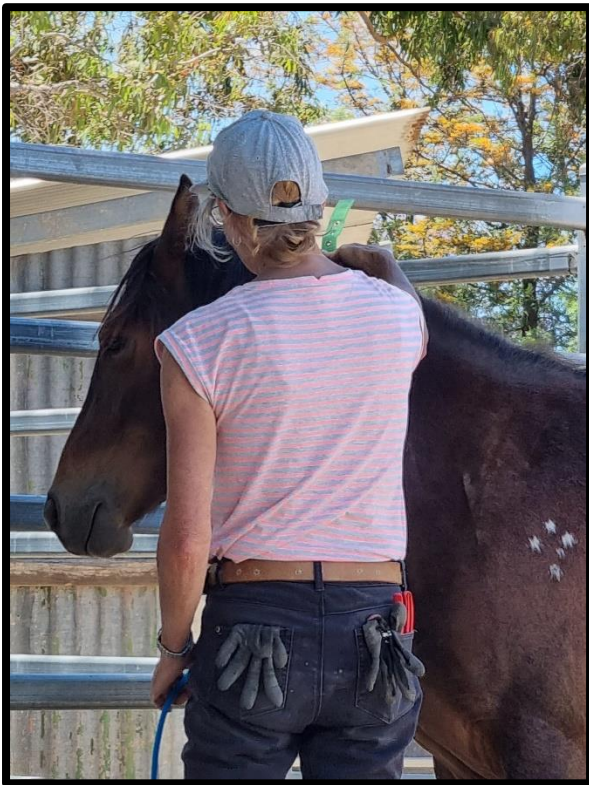
Work out a plan to get your Brumby out of the confinement of the yards as soon as it's safe. It's hard on a wild horse both emotionally and physically, to be confined after having the freedom to roam.

It is preferable if there is a small paddock adjacent to the yard, ensure the fences are of sufficient height to discourage jumping out of the paddock. The companion horse/horses will be a great support or lead for your Brumby to leave the yard and go into (and out of) a bigger paddock.

Some horses find it hard to leave the yard; they've learned to feel secure in there and they're too frightened to venture out. Let your Brumby pick their way out of the yard in their own time, often they will come out when hunger calls. Put some hay/feed-bowl just outside the open yard gate to tempt him out if the paddock area doesn't have grass. NEVER chase your Brumby out of their yard, it could cause a serious accident, to both of you!

You will need to become adept at reading your Brumby's body language because they are exceedingly quick to react, you have to recognize when you're applying too much pressure and remove it before the horse reacts. The Brumby will give you clues as to how he's feeling by his expressions, both facial and with his body.

Note - don't wear sunglasses, horses prefer to see your eyes as they give signals, as does the expression of your face, your whole body tells them something, so ensure your body language is soft and consistent.



HOOFS2010 Brumby Rescue. Halter training, slowly, with kindness and lots of patience.

The best attributes you can bring to help your horse are **patience, understanding and kindness**. You will reap the rewards and your Brumby will begin to thrive once again. Just take it slowly, one small step at a time and enjoy the journey together.

CREATING A RELATIONSHIP

Wild horses have evolved an innate ability to read body language so are exceptionally quick to read very small changes in body language, more so than most domestic horses.

If your Brumby is not already used to human presence or interaction use the feeding opportunity to quietly walk around whilst eating, sit with them, talk to them which aims to reduce the intolerance zone.

If under too much pressure, or if your Brumby perceives they are being threatened, then they could attempt to jump or crash through the fence, or may feel the need to defend themselves by attacking the source of the threat, you. Be aware a horse is a fight or flight animal and if they are placed into a corner (either real or perceived) then you will get hurt. Always respect the space around the horse and **LISTEN to the warning signs and BACK OFF until your horse has settled and feels safe again.**



Victorian Brumby Association

The time and commitment invested by us in the initial period of adjustment and handling pays huge dividends for the horse's lifetime; it paves the way for a happy well-adjusted animal and great human/horse relationships.

TRAINING

While there is no correct training method to use, we advise using least resistance type methods which build a loving and respectful relationship and use natural wild horse behavioural psychology to guide the horse's responses.

Brumbies have a well-developed sense of self preservation, so are exceptionally sensitive to their environment and perceived threats, but rarely inherently aggressive or flighty. As Brumbies see humans (eyes in front) as predators, a handler's eye focus will alter pressure.

A Brumby head bob or nodding can indicate they feel confused but trying to work out what is expected of them. Train within the horses learning ability and avoid prolonged pressure to force the horse to comply with demands it does not understand or cannot tolerate.

Note - A newly arrived wild Brumby can seem quiet; when in fact they may have shut down to ignore unpleasant sensations. This seemingly quiet period will pass, so read the signs and adapt as needed once the shutdown period passes.



Kaimanawa Heritage Horse Association (NZ)

BRUMBY CHARACTERISTICS

Brumbies are by definition hardy, they are correct in conformation for soundness and for the type of survival qualities their breeding has developed, although this is not always wanted in the show ring. Most

Brumbies are highly protective of new foals, having had to defend their young from dingoes, so react quicker to perceived threats than domestic mares.

Brumbies are slow to mature – emotionally as well as physically. ***It is recommended a Brumby is not ridden hard or regularly until 4–5 years old.*** A wild horse is a hardy, intelligent, affectionate, loyal and long-lasting companion and in the right hands will never look back - nor will their humans!



HOOFS2010 Brumby Rescue

ABA MEMBER GROUP CONTACT

HOOFS2010 Brumby Rescue (NSW)

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Coffin Bay Brumby Preservation Society Inc. (SA)

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Kaimanawa Heritage Horses (NZ)

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