

The Australian Brumby Horse

-Australia's own "wild horse"



Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Subphylum: Vertebrata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Perissodactyla

Family: Equidae

Genus: Equus

Species: Equus caballus

Subspecies: Australian Brumby Horse

The Australian Brumby horse is both detest for the destruction of the environment, and loved for its beauty. There are people that are fighting for its survival and also people that want to control the spreading of these animals. Of course there has to be a balance in the nature, but the methods used to reduce the herds must be humane.

Overview

The first horses arrived as early as 1788 to Australia, and the Australian Brumby horses originate from the horses that Sergeant James Brumby left behind on his property at Mulgrave Place in New South Wales in 1804. Also their name originates from James Brumby.² These horses were developed to be strong because of the harsh climate, bitterly cold winters and dry warm summers.

The Australian Brumby horse is a feral horse and it is not the same as a wild horse. The feral horses are free roaming and are descended from the domesticated horse. The feral horses are either strayed or have escaped into the wild. The majorities of the Brumby horses lives in Queensland and are living together in herds. The herds consist of several mares, their foals, some juveniles and a dominant stallion. The feral horses breed as the domesticated horse and can produce one foal every second year and the mare is pregnant during 11 months.³

The herds grow constantly and today there are about 300 000 to 400 000 individuals. The herds are causing erosion and damage to the environment and they also compete with the native wildlife. Horses can travel up to 50 km away from their waterhole, which make them able to graze but also destroy huge areas of grasslands.⁴

¹ <http://www.savethebrumbies.org>

² <http://www.brumbychaustralia.com/GFRNP-MPage.htm>

³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brumby>

⁴ <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/publications/horse/pubs/horse.pdf>

Controlling the horses

There are several methods for the removal of the horses. During two days in October 2000, more than 600 feral horses were killed in the Guy Fawkes River National Park by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Because of this, the cruelty to these animals has caused a reaction among horse lovers all over the world.⁵

The methods that were used was either shooting the horses from ground or by helicopter. The problem is that they shoot without aiming properly which results in that the horses bleed to death.

There are problems concerning the brumbies in how the best removal and controlling of the horses should be done. According to the "Managing feral horses in Victoria: A study of community attitudes and perceptions" the horses are not presented as pest animals but there is still a demand of controlling their spreading. This problem is solved by killing the horses in several ways. Of those 500 asked in the study, 79 percent did not consider the horses as pest animals. 74 percent of the people that believed that the feral horse did constitute a threat against the environment did not think that the feral horse fulfilled the criteria for a pest animal. 20 percent thought that ground shooting was acceptable and only 4.3 percent agreed with shooting from helicopter. 50 percent never considered helicopter shooting acceptable.⁶

Best way to control the herds

My opinion is that these horses have become a part of the Australian fauna and even though they are consuming and tearing on the environment they also have the right to live in the nature. Animals that are causing damage and erosion on the environment in a big extent should be controlled in one way or another, this includes both feral and wild animals. But the methods must be humane. During my research on these horses terrifying pictures has been found, pictures of mares being killed while still being pregnant. This does not only kill the mare but also the foal. Imagine the foal still kicking inside and slowly dying along with the mare.

Another example of the terrible methods is mares that are killed when the foal is still standing beside them. This leads to a painful slow death for the foal, due to the fact that it can not survive on its own. Another terrifying picture is the one with the horse that was shot and later on died because of the wounds caused in the rump and belly.⁷
See pictures below.



⁵ <http://www.brumbywatchaustralia.com/GFRNP-MPage.htm>

⁶ <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1442-8903.2007.00375.x>

⁷ <http://www.savethebrumbies.org>

I totally agree to what “Save The Brumbies Organisation” is telling us on their homepage: “Stop shooting bullets - start darting”. It is not okay just to shoot animals and then let them slowly die a painful death. If they are going to use methods that include hunting it should be regulated. Rules that protect pregnant mares or mares with foal from being shoot by having hunting season when the mares are not expecting offspring’s, similar to the Swedish elk hunting. All these rules and restrictions should be to protect the horses from long time suffering.

There is also natural controlling of the horse, for example the climate that can cause drought and minimize the amount of water available for the herds. During these circumstances the old, juveniles, mares and their foals are the most vulnerable⁸. Also the carrying capacity is regulating the herds. Because when there isn’t enough food and water the herds will decrease.

There is also an adoption program for the Australian Brumby horses, which provides interested people all over the world with horses from Australia, organised by “Save the brumbies organisation”.

Feral animals or wild animals have the right to live in the nature, but if regulation is necessary the methods of regulating must be human. The Australian people released these horses long time ago, and now the have to take care of them in a good way. The Australian Brumby horses have now become a landmark for the Australian country and I would be glad to also see that in the future.



⁸ <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/publications/horse/pubs/horse.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.savethebrumbies.org/gallery/?show=gallery>