

Mountain Cattleman's Association of Victoria Inc
SUBMISSION TO THE Victorian Alps Wild Horse Management Plan

The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria has a long history involved in the management of the Victorian High Country. The MCAV has always believed in the practical management of our alpine regions with grazing and fuel reduction slow burns. Wild horses are part of our tradition, culture, heritage and history. They are a part our life and are a genuine part of the landscape.

Wild Horses and the MCAV

Wild horses or brumbies as we call them are important to our traditional heritage. Our traditions involve catching brumbies, taming and using them. No horses are as sure footed as a brumby in the alpine regions.

Our culture is mirrored in the *Man from Snowy River* films in which the brumby is the hero. As our President Charlie Lovick says "We see brumbies as an extension of our own horses. A Mountain Cattleman is nothing if he hasn't got a partnership with a good horse. They are part of our whole existence."

Over population of Wild horses

The MCAV understands there are now in excess of 10,000 wild horses in the Alpine National Park. This number has increased exponentially since our licences were taken away in 2005. Before this, the MCAV and Cattlemen's families played an integral part in the management of the wild horse numbers. Since 2005 the lack of traditional management practises which date back to European settlement have allowed Brumby numbers to increase, to a point where they have become a threat to the environment and their own welfare.

Over many years the Mountain Cattlemen contributed to the management of the wild horses in the alpine national park. This is acknowledged in the Parks Victoria paper [The Ecology of Wild Horses and their Environmental Impact in the Victorian Alps May 2013](#). "Graziers managed the distribution (and numbers) of wild horses to varying degrees from the mid- 1800s up until cattle grazing ceased early this century (Walter 2002; Foster 2004)."ⁱ Our organisation strongly defends and supports the traditional management methods which kept the numbers of Brumbies under control and did so for more 100 years.

We submit that this proven form of control and management should be reintroduced.

Wild horses (Brumby) numbers and the Victorian Alps

Wild horses now conclusively belong in the Alpine National Park. The traditional, cultural and heritage aspects of the brumby are very important. However numbers have exploded due to the lack of traditional control measures and the MCAV agrees the numbers must be reduced and then maintained at a sustainable level.

The Cattlemen's knowledge and expertise will be essential in managing a sustainable population of brumbies into the future. It is clear that Victorians overwhelmingly support the retention of the

iconic brumby in its rightful place in Victoria's High Country. If the Mountain Cattlemen and the traditional pursuit of Brumby running weren't removed by the authorities the wild horse numbers and the landscape would be vastly different.

Control Methods

The MCAV supports 3 types of wild horse (Brumby) control:

1. Trap yards – just: 'trapping' with inducements such as feed or salt and then relocating.
2. 'Brumby running' with ropes by horse riders with experience in this activity.
3. Mustering in suitable conditions into yards with a suitable number of experienced riders.

These methods are inter-connected and should be used in conjunction with one another. They are proven methods, have been used for generations, proven their known effectiveness. The MCAV families have proved over 100 years these techniques keep the numbers at sustainable levels

Control Methods not supported:

The MCAV is against inhumane methods.

The MCAV is against helicopter culling. While helicopter mustering may be used, the alpine environment does not allow any accuracy for shooting from helicopters and suffering occurs.

When removing captured wild horses, the MCAV supports

- Transport captured Brumbies out to local farms
- Transport of captured Brumbies for sale
- Euthanasia if the carcass is utilised

The MCAV does not support

- Euthanizing horses that are most suited to be re-homed.
- The total eradication of the brumby population

Solutions

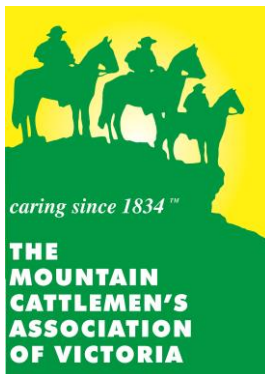
Certainly the knowledge of the mountain cattleman should be actively sought to understand the history of the horse and their behaviours. Cattlemen and experienced Bushmen and women in their own right have the greatest historic knowledge of the problem. Some members would be willing to cooperate and offer advice.

If approximately 6 teams were allowed on the ground they would have the chance to capture large numbers of wild horses. Traditional methods could close the excess numbers without shooting – however resources need to be increased. The solution has to be coordinated across the state border to have a successful outcome.

We need to change the regulations relating to the catching brumbies in Victoria's National Parks in order to effectively manage the numbers of wild horses.

Conclusion

Brumbies are an iconic part of our High Country heritage and if maintained in sustainable numbers can be beneficial to the environment. Grazing by both horses and cattle reduce fuel loads in the High Country and Brumbies assist in that important process. However we say again it is important that Brumby numbers are managed.



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Joanna Axford, Michelle Dawson and Daniel BrownⁱThe Ecology of Wild Horses and their Environmental Impact in the Victorian Alps May 2013 Parks Victoria