

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **NSW Government Sanctions Inhumane Brumby Cull in Kosciuszko National Park**

**Sydney, NSW – 20 March 2024** – Animal welfare groups are condemning the NSW Government's aerial cull of Brumbies (wild horses) in Kosciuszko National Park (KNP), calling it a brutal and unnecessary massacre.

Over the past 15 days alone, 534 horses, including foals, have been inhumanely chased by helicopters and then shot from the air. This horrifying figure comes on top of over 300 horses killed in the preceding weeks.

This brutal cull disregards expert testimony and reliable data. Ms Claire Galea, a respected biostatistician with 25 years of experience, along with an independently funded high-tech aerial survey, provided population estimates significantly lower than the government's figures.

The government relied on a population estimate derived from a survey by Stuart Cairns, conducted with software developed by the University of St Andrews. However, the university refused to peer-review Cairns' methodology due to glaring flaws. This method produced an implausible population boom, claiming a 41% growth in one year.

The university itself acknowledges the absurdity, as such a rate would require mares to foal seven times a year, defying basic biology (horses have an 11-month gestation period and rarely have twins). According to information about population growth in wild horse herds provided by the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, they would consider Cairns' figures unrealistic.

This reliance on demonstrably flawed data raises serious concerns about the legitimacy of the cull. More credible data suggests a much lower initial population, possibly as low as 1,200 horses. It's important to note that government legislation mandates a minimum of 3,000 Brumbies remain in the park. This cull may have already decimated the population beyond this legal requirement.

Furthermore, the cull blatantly disregards animal welfare standards. The RSPCA's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for aerial culling are being completely ignored. These SOPs exist to minimize suffering, and their disregard highlights the cruelty of this operation. Even the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions' SOPs acknowledge the slow and agonizing deaths caused by aerial shooting, as the shots from a helicopter don't render horses instantaneously unconscious.

This cull is a travesty. We urge the NSW Government to halt this needless slaughter and adopt non-lethal alternatives for the management of the Brumby population in Kosciuszko National Park.