



Monaro Acclimatisation Society Inc

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Sustainable future fishing for trout and native fish

PRESS RELEASE

20,000 Feral Horses in KNP

Feral horse numbers have more than tripled in the past five years in the Australian Alps, according to results just released from the Australian Alps Feral Horse Aerial Survey. In fact, the total conservative estimate of numbers put the population of horses within Kosciuszko National Park at greater than 20,000.

This explosion in feral horse numbers puts at imminent risk trout fishing along the rivers and streams within Kosciuszko National Park. These feral horses are destroying not only the enjoyment of river fishers within the park but they are trashing the headwaters of the Murray and Murrumbidgee. In the case of the Murray this puts at risk up to 30% of the water yield for that entire Murray river system.

In one of the three survey blocks, North Kosciuszko, feral horse numbers have risen from an estimated 3,255 in 2014 to 15,687 in 2019, a near five-fold increase. This is the area of Blue Water Holes and Tantangara Dam an area where many fishers have and hopefully will continue to enjoy the fishing, camping and being in the mountains.

With no horses removed in 2017 or 2018, and only 99 removed this year, the population has been allowed to grow at about 23% per year, close to the maximum of about 25% known for feral horses worldwide.

There is now an estimated 20,209 feral horses distributed across the surveyed area of Kosciuszko National Park, many thousands of horses will face starvation when the region next burns. This is predictable, inevitable and tragically also completely avoidable had effective feral horse control been implemented.

The prolonged drought hitting Australia has worsened the impacts of horses in the high country. Plants already struggling to survive are being trampled and grazed, and areas around standing water resemble feedlots.

These impacts will worsen over summer, both for the national park and the horses themselves, with herds suffering in the heat and struggling to survive. Horses starved to death along the Snowy River in Kosciuszko in 2018. The inevitable result from this feral horse population explosion will see whole aquatic

communities within the mountain rivers, streams and lakes destroyed due to the trampling of waterways and wetlands by the horses.

The task ahead for the NSW Government will not be easy. Parliament has given the feral horse of Kosciuszko National Park heritage status and promised a new feral horse management plan which is now being developed by the recently established Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Community Advisory Panel and the Wild Horse Scientific Advisory Panel.

The Monaro Acclimatisation Society is dismayed at the management of the feral horse problem in Kosciuszko National Park and calls on the NSW Government to urgently reduce the feral horse population within the park to sustainable levels before further irreparable damage occurs.

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