

Evaluation of the Implementation of the 2021 Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan

Staff and Visitor Safety Review

Summary

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) manages wild horse populations for the protection of natural and cultural values. Wild horse management in Kosciuszko National Park is administered through the 2021 Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan (the plan). The plan has been prepared to meet the requirements of section 5 of the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018*.

In September 2022 the Minister for Environment and Heritage requested the Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment undertake an evaluation of the implementation of the plan.

Implementation of the plan is still in its infancy, having commenced on-ground works in February 2022. Procedures and processes for some methods of control are still in the development stage and have not been implemented.

This review has confirmed NPWS have established work practices and process to manage worker and public safety. Further work will be required to ensure all elements of the safe systems of work once completed for the new operations are established and functioning as intended.

The review found there is no immediate risk to public safety given shooting operations are carried out by trained shooters in areas less frequented by park users. The review also recognised the risk posed by members of the community placing themselves in shooting areas with the aim of intentionally disrupting operations and or using social media to harass those involved with the operations.

The review found NPWS has developed a series of standard operating procedures to guide wild horse management consistent with the plan.

Recommendations

- 1. Establish a safety and risk assurance program which includes an audit of WHS and public safety controls within the next 12 months**
- 2. Provide workers with the option of vaccination against known zoonotic diseases**
- 3. Develop a process, including a checklist, for assessing and recording horse handling skills**
- 4. Ensure aviation standard operating procedures for aerial mustering are contextualised to wild horse management**
- 5. Establish a register to track training and currency requirements**
- 6. Prepare a risk assessment for shooting wild horses in yards noting this control method has not yet been utilized.**
- 7. Manage the risk of new equipment by undertaking a risk assessment when new equipment is introduced**
- 8. Develop a records management system for safety documentation**
- 9. Reflect the importance of public safety in standard operating procedures**
- 10. Prepare for emergency medical events by developing a standard medical emergency response plan**

- 11. Finalise the euthanasia standard operating procedure to include hazards and controls for worker and public safety**
- 12. Develop strategies to manage psychosocial hazards**
- 13. Develop systems to reduce the likelihood of public interactions during operations**
- 14. Develop public communications material about public safety mitigations employed during ground shooting operations**

The safety and visitor safety review contains operational information and is therefore not published in full.