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NEWSLETTER 32 – JUNE 2010

Hi and welcome to our June newsletter – you may have noticed that it isn't June. We tried to merge the newsletter with July, but have too much coming up, so here it is – the June newsletter!

Our wonderful Bogong Brumbies continued to arrive, so we have been very busy, gentling and training them to ready them for their new homes. Our wonderful vet Anne Jacobs from Rosehill came out and gelded eight of our stallions and colts in one day – that was fun!

We have been doing lots of clinic planning and hope to see you all at some of them as the year goes on. The Show Preparation clinic is one that we're really looking forwards to – part of the build up to the show season which we are very excited about!

I have put a picture below of the new love of my life, VBA Clancy. I included a pic of him in last months newsletter too, but he is so photogenic and just so gorgeous that you may have to get used to seeing him here! Clancy was gelded two weeks ago and aged by our vet – he is 12 years old and has acclimatized so well to being a domestic horse. I am looking forwards to saddle starting him over summer and showing the world (well, maybe just us Aussies!) what an old Brumby stallion can do!



THANKYOU!

A big thank you this month. Firstly to Kristin Bitmead one of our wonderful committee members who organized a chocolate drive for the VBA. We sold lots of yummy chocolate and made more than \$950, which is just fabulous. In Brumby rescue terms, that sort of money is enough for us to pick up another group of Brumbies and care for and feed them for two weeks! Special thanks to Graham, Julie and Bridget who sold seven boxes of chocolate between them!

WHATS ON?

June - Photo Competition. Get your horse out and about without leaving the comfort of your home! Winners will be reviewed for inclusion in the 2011 VBA Calendar!

1st August – Planet Ark Treeday. Join us at Brumbys Run Sanctuary to celebrate our Brumbies birthday by planting lots of trees and commemorate our lost Brumbies with a special memorial garden.

3rd October – Show clinic – How to prepare your Brumby for shows from Agricultural to Royal level and an informal gymkhana in the afternoon.

16th October – Brumby classes at Geelong Royal Show. Get along and support these classes if you want them again next year!

12th November – Brumby Classes at Ballarat Ag Show. Be there!

18th – 21st November – Equitana. Brumbies will be there again – come along and see our Brumbies wow the audiences!

5th December – Brumby Classes at National Buckskin Society All Breed Show in Bendigo.

11th December – Wild Horse Gentling Clinic

12th December – Brumbies Big Day Out. Show classes, Gymkhana classes and all things Brumby. A great day out with your family – human and equine!

16th January 2011 - Barrel Racing. Training/competition day.

6th March 2011 - Teaching your horse to 'pony' (have another horse lead from them). Training morning and ride around the Brumby Sanctuary and State Park in the afternoon.

Later in 2011

- **Starting your horse on stockwork.** Training/ small muster day.
- **Cross Country riding/ jumping.** Train on individual fences and then ride the course! Training day.

THE INS AND OUTS OF IT ALL....

Off to their new homes this month were VBA Echo, who went home with Sally, VBA Sam went home with Rose and VBA Scooter and VBA RM went home with Julie and Graham. VBA Bond went home with Georgia to prepare for his new Pony Club career and VBA Trooper went home to his new family, Steve, Loo and Kyton. We wish all these Brumbies and their new owners all the very best in their lives ahead!

Arriving from the Bogong High Plains, Alpine National Park this month were our beautiful black stallion VBA Clancy and his mares, VBA Molly and VBA Pretty Sally and foal VBA Trooper along with yearling filly VBA Goldie and foal VBA Sassy. VBA Ned Kelly, VBA Fokie and VBA Bounce were the very last Brumbies caught before the snow hit up in the Alps, closing the trap yards for winter.

KOSCIUSZKO BRUMBY MANAGEMENT DISASTER

It is with great sadness that we have to tell you that on Wednesday the 7th of July, 63 Brumbies from the Northern region of the Kosciuszko National Park were trucked to the Camden (outer Sydney) horse sales to be sold for slaughter. We heard our first rumours about this at 9.30pm the night beforehand and managed to get media and the RSPCA to attend as well as some independent observers. The Brumbies were in poor condition and several had unacceptable injuries. There is no question that wild horses have absolutely no place at public horse sales. Trucking them for hours to get there only to be publicly exposed and further terrified as they were run through the sales is cruel and inhumane and must not be allowed to happen again. Although there were some members of the public interested in buying some of the Brumbies, the auctioneers seemed unable to see them bidding until the media arrived. As a result, 61 of the 63 Brumbies were sold for slaughter for pet food. They will now be further transported to a knackery, there to await their fate. We wish the private purchasers of the two youngsters the best with their very lucky Brumbies.

Lucky Kosi Brumby VBA Belle with her owner Kristin.



We hope very much that you'll hear more about this in coming days in the media.

Between September and November last year, the VBA took nearly forty Brumbies from the Northern Kosi unit, where the Brumbies that went through Camden today came from. A change in NPWS management in the Kosi unit has been disastrous to our efforts to rehome the Kosciuszko Brumbies and they now seem uninterested in rehoming these Brumbies to us.

We are meeting with Parks NSW and RSPCA this month to try to ensure this terrible situation never occurs again. We are encouraging anyone who feels strongly to write letters – contact Colleen for more info.



Lucky Kosi Brumby Jemima, now living happily in NSW

THE VBA NON BREEDING POLICY...

The Victorian Brumby Association has a non breeding policy. What does this mean in simple terms? We don't breed Brumbies or sell entire (ungelded) stallions or colts. Ever. Do we have foals born here? Often! Most mares who have been running wild with stallions will obviously be pregnant, in fact, pretty much any filly from age of around 18 months is likely to be in foal when they arrive here at our sanctuary.

Many of the Brumbies that we have here are absolute quality horses who, if we were breeders, we would totally agree are worthy of contributing to the Brumby gene pool. So why don't we breed or sell stallions/ colts for breeding? There are two main reasons.

Firstly, there are nearly 500 Brumbies taken out of the Kosciuszko and Alpine National Parks in New South Wales and Victoria each year. We take in as many as we possibly can, but that is only 50 – 60, which leaves more than 400 being sent for slaughter each year. With those numbers dying, every foal that we deliberately breed and sell could be potentially taking away a home that a 'wild bred' Brumby could have gone to.

Secondly, there is the big debate about what a Brumby actually IS. We feel that a Brumby is a horse bred or born in the wild, as a result of natural selection.

When people interfere and choose the 'best' stallion to breed with, we may be missing something. There are many amazing looking stallions in the wild who are bachelors and haven't had a chance to contribute their genetics. In the wild, only the best of the best stallions will actually find and keep mares to breed with.

Life in the wild is incredibly tough – Brumbies with poor feet or general conformation, those with highly strung temperaments or that are not truly sociable and live well in a herd, they just don't survive to breed.

So we say with pride that ALL our Brumbies were bred in the best and toughest stud in the world. The Australian Alps have nurtured our Brumbies, refining their genetics and producing these amazing horses that we are thrilled to be able to have in our lives.



Next time you're thinking of breeding a foal, why not think about rescuing one of our gorgeous young mares in foal or even buying a weanling Brumby foal. VBA Matilda, above, is just one example, a stunning two year old true black filly who is heavily in foal to a beautiful Bay stallion who has a blaze and two socks. You can read more about Matilda and her family group on the next page.

Together we can save our Heritage Brumbies!

THE STORY OF A VERY SAD BRUMBY STALLION.

VBA Mighty Mouse was caught from the wild as a six year old stallion with his two young mares, VBA Matilda (2yo) and VBA Holly (3yo). A strong young stallion with his own family who were all in great condition, Mighty Mouse was living the life that any horse would, given the chance.

The night Mighty Mouse and his mares walked into a trap yard, all of that changed forever. They had become the statistic, the extras that had to go.

Capture is an incredibly high stress experience, even when done in the most humane manner possible.

Added to this, the week that Mighty Mouse was caught, a less experienced ranger was on duty and crucial errors were made. The night after this family group was caught, a group of bachelor stallions were also caught.

The ranger made the very bad decision to put them all in together in a holding yard.

Mighty Mouse, the protector of his herd was already incredibly stressed, trying to deal with his changed circumstances and his inability to save his family. Now he had to fight just to keep them. By the time that the error had been realized and the horses separated, Mighty Mouse was covered in bites and injuries and both his heavily pregnant mares, Holly and Matilda had been injured badly. Holly had one of her ears almost torn off and was bleeding heavily around her face. Matilda had sustained an ear injury as well as a kick to a back leg that had severely damaged her tendons.

(Note: In the wild, Mighty Mouse would have been able to keep his mares a safe distance away from other stallions and if a fight had occurred, Holly and Matilda would stand at a safe distance from the fighting.)

Two days later when we arrived to pick up the group of Brumbies we were confronted with a terrible sight. Matilda's leg had become badly infected and she couldn't bear any weight on it. We were faced with transporting this youngster seven hours to try to save her or euthanizing her. We made the call that we would take her home, give her the best of everything and if there was some improvement within 48 hours, we would continue battling to save her. Keep in mind that this was not going to be like treating an injury in a domestic horse!



VBA Mighty Mouse in the yards after his capture.

Matilda thrived when she got to Brumbies run. Her injury is healing well, although six months of paddock rest is required to see if she will ever be riding sound. Holly's ear has healed up well, although she will always have one floppy ear due to the injuries she received.

Mighty Mouse began his basic education and was gelded. Mouse as we called him was calm, sweet and interested in people – a real joy to handle. Just before he was gelded though, we began to notice a change in his attitude. No longer waiting at the front of his yard for us, Mighty Mouse seemed depressed, standing at the back of his yard with his head down. He ate all his feed and drank enough, but all was not well.

After he was gelded, we turned Mighty Mouse out in the paddock with a gentle domestic gelding and several other recently gelded stallions. They were a gentle sociable mob and all were happy – except Mouse. Mouse spent his days standing at the gate next to the yards that he had been trained in, head down.

We had to bucket water to him as he wouldn't walk fifty metres to the dam. He wouldn't even leave the gate to eat from the roll of hay, fifteen metres away.

The vet had examined Mouse before she gelded him and there seemed to be nothing wrong physically, he was just the saddest little stallion in the world. It was depressing just looking at him – you could feel his sadness.

One day, we had let one of his mares, Matilda out in the house yard to graze and she went and stood next to Mouse. Although he didn't seem to care about anything, I opened the gate and invited our little wild stallion into the house yard. He timidly came through and then stood there, shut down again. I observed him for the rest of the afternoon and he started to follow Matilda (who by this stage was quite domesticated) around. That night, we walked behind him to put him away in Matilda's paddock with her and her companion and he hasn't looked back.

Still quiet and calm, Mouse is once again a happy stallion, surveying his new world through hopeful eyes. To help Mighty Mouse acclimatize to his new domestic life, we are looking for a special home who would be able to rehome him with one of his mares, Holly.

Mighty Mouse is a 6 year old Bay gelding, about 14hh, Holly is a three year old Brown mare who is currently about 14.1hh and will grow more after she has foaled down. Holly has one permanently floppy ear as a result of the injuries she sustained. She has no pain and is totally comfortable with her damaged ear being handled, scratched etc. Please bear in mind that this is a three in one type of package. All three Brumbies will be super all purpose riding horses, pony club, ARC, pony dressage etc. If you'd like more photos, information or to meet this wonderful little family, please call or email Colleen.

VBA Mighty Mouse with Kristin.



Together we can save our Heritage Brumbies!