

The Guy Fawkes Brumbies



by Michelle Stewart

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Where did the Guy Fawkes brumbies come from?

Horses have been in the Guy Fawkes region of northern NSW since the 1830's when the land was opened up to grazing. Large sections were unfenced so some horses strayed, becoming brumbies.

From the 1890's to the early 1940's a number of stations in the area were involved in breeding horses for the remount trade. Guy Fawkes horses, including brumbies, were drafted for use by the Light Horse in the Second World War.

The numbers of brumbies were controlled by property owners and lease holders. However, in 1972 much of this land became the Guy Fawkes River National Park and management of the brumbies all but stopped until the early 1990's.

What do the Guy Fawkes brumbies look like?

The majority of Guy Fawkes brumbies are browns and bays (approx 60%). However, a high percentage (30%) are creamies; that is palominos, duns, buckskins and paints. The creamy influence is attributed to their famous ancestor Saladin, one of the founding horses of the Australian Stock Horse breed.

A genetic study shows that the Guy Fawkes brumbies have a high similarity to Arab breeds and to saddle and harness light horses such as Thoroughbreds. They are also genetically similar to Walers.



Guy Fawkes Marengo – a superb example of a Guy Fawkes Brumby

Guy Fawkes brumbies are of medium height, mostly standing between 14 and 15 hands. They have fine, clean legs showing good dense bone, a short back, muscular sloping shoulders and a broad head.

The NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service cull

In October 2000 the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service carried out an aerial cull, slaughtering over six hundred brumbies. When news of this broke, the public was outraged. How could the government treat brumbies this way? What's more, they wanted to get rid of the remaining brumbies in the national park. The Guy Fawkes brumby would be no more.

The campaign to save the brumbies

As a result of community objections, aerial culling has been banned in NSW national parks. The local community wanted more than that though. They wanted the heritage value of the Guy Fawkes brumby to be recognised and for them to be managed on this basis. After much campaigning the government started to listen. They conceded the brumbies did have heritage value but upheld they still had to be removed from the national park.

Jan Carter, a talented musician and horse lover, set up a charity called Save the Brumbies which is devoted to ensuring a better future for the Guy Fawkes brumbies.

The Guy Fawkes Heritage Horse Association was also formed. In April 2004, the association was given the go ahead to start a twelve month passive capture and removal trial.

The success of the trial has led to the implementation of a horse management plan for Guy Fawkes River National Park. Under this plan, all brumbies will be removed from the national park.

Combalo Heritage Horse Stud

Mark, Helen and Michelle Stewart purchased Guy Fawkes Marengo and his mob out of a sense of duty and a desire to secure a future for the Guy Fawkes brumbies. These horses form the foundation of Combalo Heritage Horse Stud.



GF Marengo, GF Snowy and Combalo Liberation – some of Combalo Heritage Horse Stud's brumbies

The Stewarts are proud to offer selected weanlings and other ages for sale. Details can be found on their website: <http://www.michellestewart.com.au/combalo>

References:

Heritage Working Party, 2002, Report of the Heritage Working Party on the Horses of Guy Fawkes River National Park to the Minister for the Environment; Volumes 1 & 2.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 2003, Draft Guy Fawkes River National Park Horse Management Plan.