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The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead,
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www.ufaw.org.uk

Animal Welfare 2015, 24: 255-265
ISSN 0962-7286
doi: 10.7120/09627286.24.3.255

A welfare assessment of methods used for harvesting, hunting and population control of kangaroos and wallabies

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Abstract

In Australia, several macropod species are subjected to commercial harvesting, recreational hunting and population management, using both lethal and non-lethal measures. Some techniques for killing macropods can cause prolonged and/or severe suffering, and of particular concern is the welfare of remaining pouch young or young-at-foot, when females with dependent young are killed. Non-lethal methods are more widely supported by the general public and include reproductive control and relocation. These methods, however, also have significant associated welfare challenges. This review outlines the welfare concerns for each current method, and concludes that an accurate head-shot by an experienced shooter is least likely to inflict suffering. However, this assumes best practice shooting, which may not be representative of field conditions. Furthermore, many aspects of macropod control and killing still require significant research. These include, but are not limited to: accurate statistics for pouch young and young-at-foot mortality and morbidity in Australian states; data on field-based compliance with National Codes of Practice; safe and remote administration of reproductive control measures; and the impact of using dogs and trapping in wallaby destruction and hunting.

Keywords: *animal welfare, culling, lethal control, macropod, non-lethal control, population management*