

Submission
No 75

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP ROSEHILL
RACECOURSE**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

animal welfare concerns within the horse racing industry. I have several welfare concerns which I outline below:

1. Oversupply of racehorses

In order to increase the chances of finding the winning champion, the racing industry depends on breeding a high number of horses and a high turn-over rate. Consequently, horses may leave the racing industry at any stage of their life, as foals, during training, during their racing career or when they retire. When horses leave racing prematurely, this is often described as 'wastage'. This wastage causes serious welfare concerns for the fate of thousands of horses leaving the industry every year.

There are many problems that the horses face as they are specifically bred for purely racing. Firstly, the majority of racehorses have a short racing career (only 2-3 years), despite the fact that these horses were bred specifically for this purpose. Secondly, the horses having been bred for racing may then be rejected from the racing industry due to poor performance, illness, injury and behavioural problems. Thirdly, further down the career the horses will face a different fate being a proportion of healthy retired racehorses will become breeding, recreational or equestrian sport horses, while others will devastatingly be sent to knackeries or abattoirs to be slaughtered.

Lastly, the exact destination of horses leaving the racing industry is unknown as accurate information is not available.

I advocate for the racing industry to adopt responsible breeding practices specifically by reducing the number of racehorses bred; which would minimise the risk of injury.

I advocate that every horse be provided with a suitable alternative role on retirement, including provisions being made to ensure their welfare.

I also support the mandatory collection and publication of comprehensive life cycle and injury statistics and the development of a national identification and traceability system for racehorses. In this way accurate information would be available on the experience of every racehorse from birth to death.

2. Use of painful devices

I am opposed to the use of devices such as whips due to their potential to inflict pain and injury. Furthermore, their use cannot be justified given that performance is influenced more by genetics, preparation and rider skill.

Other painful devices used on racehorses, which can cause discomfort and pain are tongue ties and spurs. The problems of these devices are that a tongue tie which is a large band of leather/rubber or lycra/neoprene that is wrapped tightly around the tongue and tied to the lower jaw to keep the tongue in place during a race. Restricting the movement of the tongue in this way causes discomfort and can lead to permanent injury. Secondly, spurs, which are made of metal and are attached to the back of riding boots, exert sharp pressure when the jockey squeezes or kicks the horse in the flank area.

Despite their adverse impacts, the use of whips, tongue-ties and spurs is officially endorsed by racing authorities. There is only one specific type of equipment which has been outlawed

is an electric shock device known as a jigger. A jigger is a battery-powered device which delivers an electric shock when applied to the horse's skin, which causes significant pain and long – term distress. Possession or use of a jigger is a breach of the rules of racing and is an act of cruelty under animal welfare legislation. Concerningly, despite their clear illegality, some trainers and jockeys still choose to use these devices to coerce horses in a desperate attempt to win races.

3. Risk of injury and death

There are numerous risks that are prevalent in horse racing:

Injury: There are risks of harm during races, training and trials with the main types of injuries involving muscle, bones, tendons and ligaments.

Serious injuries such as fractures and ruptured ligaments or tendons which cause pain or distress, and cannot be treated should result in immediate euthanasia.

Death: Racehorses may also die suddenly during or after a race, which may be due to heart failure or other causes such as the condition known as Exercise Induced Pulmonary Haemorrhage (EIPH), where bleeding into the lungs occurs. This has been related to over-exertion where horses may be pushed too hard to win.

Research shows two studies highlight the risks associated with excessively rigorous training programs including high speed and long distances. One study which surveyed 66 Victorian racehorse trainers found that more than half involving high volumes of galloping exceeded the reported risk levels for muscle and bone injuries [1]. [1] Morrice-West AV, Hitchens PL, Walmsley EA et al. (2019) Training practices, speed and distances undertaken by Thoroughbred racehorses in Victoria, Australia. *Equine Veterinary Journal* 52(2). The other study found that as the total distance of high-speed exercise (training and racing combined) increased, the risk of muscle and bone injuries increased [2]. Crawford, KL, Ahern BJ, Perkins NR et al. (2020) The effect of combined training and racing high-speed exercise history on musculoskeletal injuries in Thoroughbred racehorses: A Systematic review and meta-analysis of the current literature. *Animals* 10(11), 2091.

Non-fatal injuries in training, trials or racing do not require immediate euthanasia on humane grounds, and may involve repairable fractures or ligament/tendon damage. However, considerable pain can be experienced in relation to the acute injury as evidenced by lameness, as well as possible pain endured during the healing process and/or treatment regime.

Longer rest periods required: A recent study of Australian racing thoroughbreds found a very high prevalence of bone injury and fatigue, especially in older horses with a long history of racing and training [3].] Bani Hassan E, Mirams M, Mackie EJ et al. (2017) Prevalence of subchondral bone pathological changes in the metacarpal/metatarsal of racing Thoroughbred horses. *Australian Veterinary Journal* 95: 362-369. The authors concluded that this evidence suggests that horses require longer rest periods than what is currently practised in the racing industry, to allow bone healing and recovery.

There are difficulties in transparencies appear to be that the industry does not provide collated statistics on injuries and fate of racehorses, so a true figure of overall injuries is not available. There needs to be mandatory collection and publication of comprehensive life cycle and injury statistics for all racehorses for complete transparency.

4. Administration of banned substances otherwise known as doping

There are many cases of 'doping' of horses to have been undertaken by some trainers and/or owners as a way to enhance performance despite this being illegal. Despite random testing of horses being carried out by racing stewards with significant penalties for breaches but this still does not deter some trainers.

Use of unregistered veterinary chemical products: Banned or unregistered substances includes unregistered veterinary chemical products, restricted prescription medicines (whether veterinary or human medicines) that have not been properly supplied and labelled, or any other substances or products used illegally.

I understand that some drugs may mask pain and therefore remove an important protective mechanism to prevent further injury, whilst others may cause unexpected adverse side effects. For example, a study identified significant risks with the misuse of cobalt in racehorses, including thickening of the blood, and heart and nerve problems. Several cases of illegal cobalt use in the Australian racing industry have been reported over recent years.

To improve and rectify this situation the racing industry needs to review and undertake more vigorous testing and impose harsher more secure penalties to deter 'doping'.

5. Racing immature horses

Horses are very young when they commence training for example one-year-olds when they are in preparation to compete in two-year-old races.

There problems with this young training has been show in research that shin soreness is a common cause of lameness in two-year-old racehorses and that fast track work greatly increases the risk of injury.

Even though other studies have shown that low level training of young horses may help condition immature bones to reduce the risk of injury. However, in practice training methods are not prescribed consequently trainers can impose programs that may be too rigorous for some young horses.

Due to these numerous problems in welfare I am opposed to the racing of immature horses (e.g. two-year-old races) and I advocate that before training commences that an independent veterinary assessment is done to verify that the horse has matured satisfactorily to participate.

6. Jumps racing

As Jumps racing involves horses racing at speed, over long distances (at least 2.8 km) and over numerous obstacles. There are two types of jumps racing – hurdles and steeplechase races, with the latter generally being over longer distances than hurdles and involving higher obstacles.

Permission of Jump racing varies by state, for example Victoria is the only State which permits jumps racing, with the South Australian government announcing a ban on jumps racing under animal welfare legislation in July 2022.

Injury and death has occurred from Jumps racing - from 2009 to 2021, at least 76 horses have died as a result of participating in jumps racing. However, the true figure is believed to be higher thought as industry statistics on deaths occurring in training and trials are not publicly available this cannot be accurately verified.

Despite attempts by the industry to improve safety, many horses continue to be injured and die. Jumps racing was banned in New South Wales in 1997 and I support a ban in Victoria.

7. Lack of enforceable standards

I am concerned that there are no mandatory welfare standards for racehorses. This means that legal protection is limited to the minimal requirements under State based animal welfare legislation.

This lack of mandatory welfare standards differs to other areas of animal welfare, where animals are used such as farming and animal research, in which they have specified welfare standards which must be adhered to.

I believe that the implementation of legal welfare standards for racehorses, which would eliminate practices that cause injury, pain, suffering or distress, is an urgent government priority.

8. Inadequate regulation

Self-regulation - the horse racing industry largely governs itself in terms of animal welfare through state based racing authorities. I feel that this raises concerns regarding adequacy of monitoring and enforcement. As self-regulation, particularly in the absence of appropriate standards, particularly without independent inspections, shows that significant welfare issues can continue undetected.

Furthermore, there are incentives such as increasing prize money for two-year-old races which can encourage more rigorous training of immature horses, and worsen the problems for the horses which can potentially leading to more injuries.

Regulation: For clarity, I propose that the comprehensive regulation of all horse racing by an independent body with a formal and complete separation between the integrity and regulatory functions from the commercial functions.

9. Lack of industry transparency

I feel that it is imperative that the racing industry collate and publish relevant data that affect the welfare of horses for complete transparency.

At present, insufficient is known about the true nature and extent of injuries and deaths of horses this is important as it affects the 'wastage' rate and fate of racehorses.

I believe that until such data is available, the industry will not be motivated or compelled to take action to improve animal welfare in these specific areas.