

Submission to Thoroughbred Aftercare Welfare Working Group

Submitted by: The Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses
July 2020



Introduction

The definition of welfare: “statutory procedure or social effort designed to promote the basic physical and material well-being of those in need”

In respect of its treatment of horses, horse racing not only neglects horse welfare, it is fundamentally designed to do the opposite.

Main Issues

- Raced too young
- Jumps racing
- Confinement causing psychological distress
- Unnatural diet causing stomach ulcers
- Whips
- Exercise-Induced Pulmonary Haemorrhage (EIPH)
- Racing in the heat
- High incidence of breakdowns
- Negative reinforcement techniques
- Insufficient recovery time from injuries
- Insufficient policing of the Australian and Local Rules of Racing
- Insufficient penalties for breaches
- Abject failure of care for retired racehorses
- Lack of traceability and accountability
- Lack of transparency

There is a strong argument that if the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTAA) was applied to horse racing, the industry would have to be shut down.

It has been stated many times by racing industry administrators that animal welfare is their highest priority. If the racing industry is serious about animal welfare, it needs to firstly acknowledge that many of its current practices are harmful to horses and these practices need to stop.

“Where money is the driver there is always corruption and people who will exploit horses at every turn. I have found there are those at every level of racing who will lie, cheat, lack integrity, and have no compassion or empathy and some who are just plain straight out crooks.”

Peter Kerkenezov BM

Former Racing Industry Vet of 50 years
BVSc (Qld), DipAppSc, Cert Equine Surgery
Sept 2018

For the racing industry to take thoroughbred welfare seriously, there needs to be a monumental paradigm shift that firstly acknowledges the horse as a sentient being and not a commodity. Every horse deserves the same respect and care irrespective of whether they've won a Melbourne Cup or in fact never raced.

Whilst the ABC 7.30 story, The Final Race, was a huge wake up call for an industry that is quickly losing its social licence, the abhorrent practices that are inflicted upon racehorses on a daily basis continue. Although the racing industry's resistance to change is well known and acknowledged, it is now time that it became pro-active and dealt with the myriad of animal welfare issues if it wants to remain relevant in modern society.

The fact that the majority of horses race for less than three years is proof that they are pushed too often, too young and too far. Most are retired before even reaching maturity that occurs at around five years.

We note that all members of the TAWWG panel and the steering group except for Biddha Jones have had or still have a pecuniary interest and a general interest in horse racing. More importantly, there is not a single member who can advocate for the horse without compromise.

If this committee and its findings are to have any integrity at all, at least one member should be appointed who can represent the horses and speak on their behalf.

CPR would welcome the opportunity to have a representative on the panel and also strongly recommends Glennys Oogies, Director of Animals Australia.

ISSUE 1: What Is Good Horse Welfare?

What are the fundamental principles that must be considered in assessing horse welfare?

The principle of “horse welfare” is the simple act of doing what is in the horse’s best interest to meet their physical and psychological needs. By definition, horse racing in its current form cannot be considered in the horse’s interest.

If we as a society accept that horseracing is an acceptable treatment of an animal that may or may not be a willing participant, it is imperative that the animal’s welfare is given the highest priority. While the racing industry has stated many times that animal welfare is their highest priority, it continues to allow practices that in any other circumstance other than on a racetrack would constitute animal cruelty and animal abuse.

If the racing industry wants to have any credibility in respect of its treatment of horses, it not only needs to fall into line with the very basic animal welfare legislation currently in place that it somehow receives dispensation from, it must do away with all practices which physically, mentally and/or emotionally harm the horse. Isolation, the inability to graze, high protein concentrated diets, instruments of cruelty including whips, bits, spurs and tongue ties, and fear inducing training methods all compromise horses’ welfare.

Horses often report to the track already lame, yet are forced to race and this often results in their ultimate “breakdown”. At just a few years old, the animals are damaged, often making them difficult to rehome.

If the industry brings an animal into the world, they should be obliged to care for them and ensure them a good life. All horses are equal and ought to be treated equally well, regardless of their state of health and their ability to earn money.

Should there be enforceable standards of care for horses?

The racing industry is exactly that - an industry that is primarily motivated to make money. Without proper enforceable standards, horses’ welfare will always be compromised.

If so, who should set those standards and who should enforce them?

A substantial problem within the racing industry is that there is a culture of bullying and intimidation. Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that anyone within the industry who attempts to report wrongdoing is frequently vilified and threatened. In some cases, racing participants have been suspended for speaking up.

The racing industry has repeatedly shown that its participants cannot be trusted and therefore it is imperative that standards are enforceable, with significant

penalties for breaches to ensure compliance. Clearly, an industry regulated system does not work.

It is therefore crucial that an independent body is established that can implement rules and investigate complaints impartially. Importantly, complaints should be able to be made without fear of retribution. This is equally important for the welfare of the workers who also are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

How does quality of life compare with quantity (length) of life?

Quality and quantity of a horse's life are equally important. It is the responsibility of the racing industry to ensure that both are given due consideration and we believe that the majority of Australians feel the same.

Under what circumstances should euthanasia be allowed?

Euthanasia should be permitted only when it is in the horse's best interest, and is an option that if the animal were able to choose, would select themselves as the only way to alleviate their pain and/or suffering. Euthanasia is a specific term that is misused by the industry on a regular basis, most often to mean a horse is killed because it is inconvenient for the industry to care for them.

Who should be allowed to euthanise a horse and by what methods?

“Euthanising a horse requires skill and experience and therefore should only be carried out by an experienced veterinarian and only for the purpose of alleviating the suffering of the horse. Euthanasia by either lethal injection, captive bolt or bullet to the brain can be acceptable however may depend on the individual circumstance. Irrespective of the method used, it is critical for the comfort of the animal for them to be adequately sedated prior. This will allow the horse to die peacefully as well as making it safer for the veterinarian.”

Peter Kerkenezov BM

Former Racing Industry Vet of 50 years
BVSc (Qld), DipAppSc, Cert Equine Surgery
Sept 2018

Should the thoroughbred breeding and racing industry have a social, moral, or even a legal responsibility for the ongoing welfare of thoroughbred horses who have exited the industry?

The very fact of asking this question is illustrative of the fact that to date, the racing industry has not evidenced a social, moral or legal responsibility for the ongoing welfare of horses who have exited the industry.

The racing industry profits from the thousands of racehorses it breeds every year and in doing so creates an oversupply of horses that ultimately require permanent homes. Up until relatively recently, it has been accepted practice to have a horse sold or given away to anyone who will take them. In most cases this will be to a horse dealer or kill buyer. In these cases they are very likely to end up at a knackery or slaughterhouse. It is not plausible that the majority of (if not all), racing participants have not known this to be common practice for decades.

It is therefore incumbent on the racing industry to now ensure that these horses go to good homes. CPR suggests that it should be the racing industry's responsibility to monitor all racehorses, whether they have competed or not for a period of three years, to ensure their horses are being properly cared for. CPR made a submission to the racing industry in 2013 outlining how this could be achieved and financed.

[Read here](#)

For the record, CPR has had communications with the principal racing authorities regarding this matter for more than a decade.

ISSUE 2 Thoroughbred Breeding

Why do 28% of horses not enter training?

It is unclear as to what horses this figure of 28% refers to. We will assume this is of those who are registered to race. Presumably, as time goes on, these horses do not show the desired physical or behavioural attributes for the racetrack.

The number of horses bred who do not enter racing would be much greater than the 28% who are registered, as studbook records show frequent missing drop numbers. Whilst some would be attributed to still born foals, the current regulations allow up to 120 days for a foal to be registered. This allows plenty of time for the breeder to decide whether the foal has the desired physical and behavioural attributes for racing. In a New Zealand study for example, Tanner et al (2012) found that 53.8% of a sample of thoroughbred and standardbred horses failed to race, and that this was comparable with 49% for the United Kingdom.

What is the fate of those that do not enter training?

Anecdotal evidence from industry workers suggests that very young horses who are deemed unviable as racehorses are killed out the back of properties where they may be eaten by wild animals or buried in large pits. CPR believes that some foals are sent to be slaughtered and has evidence of a significant number of foals at a slaughterhouse that appear to be the correct size for a foal crop for that time of the year. Presumably, these foals came from the same stud and were the foals deemed unsuitable and then discarded. There is a lucrative market in Japan for foal meat. It is therefore plausible that foals in Australia may be killed for this market.

What is the ideal size of the foal crop?

The size of the foal crop should be, whatever the industry can care for, for their entire lives. Slaughter should never be an option.

If a smaller foal crop is desirable, how should this be achieved?

Foal Registration Levy

A substantial foal levy of at least \$2,000 would deter indiscriminate breeding and help to reduce the foal crop. It would also help fund a retirement program. See page 6 of CPR's proposal for more information [here](#).

Is there capacity for the industry to alter the number of races, race meetings and handicapping provisions to positively affect welfare?

Australia far exceeds other strong horseracing countries in its number of tracks - 360 in total. The US has 162, Great Britain 60, Japan 26 and Argentina 23 (McManus et al., 2013).

While there are historical reasons for the creation of a large number of racetracks in Australia, times have changed. There is no reason for so many tracks and meetings to be held, as shown by vastly smaller numbers of tracks in other countries. The Australian system, however, supports a large breeding program and a system of transporting horses from one track to another.

It would not decrease gambling.

We acknowledge that small towns use racing as a means of community bonding, but many other options are possible these days. Existing infrastructure and land could be used for other types of entertainment. Animal cruelty-based entertainment is not a valid reason for community cohesion.

ISSUE 3 Thoroughbred Traceability

How would a national horse traceability register assist in improving welfare outcomes for retired racehorses and thoroughbreds that have never raced?

Who should pay to establish and maintain a national horse traceability register?

Who should initiate and manage this register?

CPR has already submitted a proposal to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport, supporting a National Horse Traceability Register – read [here](#).

The inquiry has already found there is a need for a National Horse Traceability Scheme and a working group is in the process of being established.

There are numerous benefits for such a register, and a summary from CPR's proposal is below.

Benefits

- All horses can be accounted for and any abuse or neglect of any horse could be traced back to the owner;
- It would reduce indiscriminate breeding that is especially rife in the racing industry;
- The statistics would provide accurate data on the numbers of horses that are bred and disposed of every year;
- Traceability would aid with controlling outbreaks of disease and assist with research;
- Greater knowledge of a horse's background will make it much easier for new owners to find suitable horses, especially concerning safety;
- Vet and vaccination history could also be uploaded to the horse's profile;
- It would aid in the recovery of missing horses and deter the theft of horses; and
- Horses would be saved from inadvertently ending up at a knackery or slaughterhouse.

Cost to Owners

With modern technology, a national scheme would not be difficult to implement as many horse associations already have their own registration systems that could be integrated into the national scheme.

Funding for the scheme should come from the breeders who are ultimately responsible for the horses' existence. A foal registration levy should be applied to cover a significant portion of the scheme though a token administration levy should also apply to cover the transfer of ownership costs.

Fees could be waived for horses who fall under the category of being rescued and adopted by licensed horse rescue organisations or licensed individuals. It is important to note that rescue groups play an important part in saving the lives of thousands of horses each year and if anything, this scheme should allow for some financial support for these organisations.

Funding

As mentioned above, funding could start with a foal registration levy applied to every single horse born. Further funding could also come from the racing industry which is the biggest breeder of horses in the country. This could come from unclaimed winnings on horse races. Penalties from breaches could also provide financial support, as well as act as a deterrent.

Enforcement

The key to the success of the scheme is adequate monitoring and enforcement - without this, the scheme will falter. This will require random audits by enforcement officers and a dedicated hotline for the reporting of breaches that need to be acted upon promptly. Fines need to be substantial enough to deter owners from non-compliance.

Summary

The large number of horses that are routinely disposed of every year necessitates the need for a National Equine Registration Scheme.

It is not acceptable to be treating these horses like disposable objects. It is important to know where and who is responsible for every horse at any time for the purpose of making owners accountable but equally important for it to act as a deterrent to unscrupulous owners and breeders.

Horses have been part of the fabric of Australia since they were brought here on the First Fleet. We now need to provide them with the protection they require to prevent them from routine neglect and abuse that they have been subjected to for the last 200 years.

Given that all thoroughbreds are microchipped and registered with the Australian Stud Book, would a national horse register be a duplication?

Without an operational national horse traceability register how can the thoroughbred industry maintain visibility over horses that leave the racing and breeding industry?

Are the thoroughbred industry's traceability measures working effectively?

Without the traceability register there is no way of compelling future owners of Thoroughbreds that do not belong to the industry to report back to the industry. If effectively created and enforced, horses will for the first time be able to be tracked throughout their entire lives making owners accountable. The current industry practice allows thousands of horses to vanish without a trace each year, as was demonstrated in the ABC 7:30 program 'The Final Race'.

The National Horse Traceability Register (NHTR) would not be a duplication of the Australian Stud Book because the Australian Stud Book is currently not working as a method of tracking horses. Its purpose, however, could be integrated into the NHTR. Having a separate body responsible for the collected data would mean compliance is much more likely.

ISSUE 4 Racing and Breeding Industry – Sponsored Programs for Retired Racehorses

What programs have been most effective in improving opportunities and welfare outcomes post racing or breeding?

How can these programs be further improved?

Is there scope for a national approach for these programs?

If so, how should this be organised and funded?

What programs overseas are working effectively to improve outcomes for thoroughbreds exiting the industry?

What capacity does the equestrian sector in Australia have to take on thoroughbreds? And how can this be increased?

The 7.30 story, 'The Final Race', is evidence that the industry has not adequately cared for retired racehorses. CPR understands that the industry programs in

place are extremely limited and appear to be more a public relations exercise than a genuine attempt to address the wastage issue.

It is the industry's responsibility to know the whereabouts and welfare status of their horses. In the face of damning evidence to the contrary, the public is no longer willing to accept vague statements and mere promises from the racing industry that these horses are being cared for.

A major issue is that after being overworked and abused during their time in racing, many horses are psychologically unsuited to rehoming, without long term costly and time-consuming rehabilitation

Despite numerous state bodies talking up a retirement program, none have been forthcoming on the numbers of those rescued and rehomed. Without this, it is impossible to judge the effectiveness of these programs.

CPR would welcome the industry being open and transparent about the number of horses they rehabilitate and rehome.

In 2013 CPR made a submission to all principle racing authorities which detailed how a national based rehoming program could work and be funded. The proposal can be read [here](#).

CPR 2013. Proposal for the Rehabilitation and Re-homing of Thoroughbred Racehorses in Australia.

The aim of the program would be that every ex-racehorse receives:

- A detailed assessment of both its physical and psychological condition by an equine veterinarian in order to establish each horse's physical and psychological ability to be rehabilitated;
- Appropriate care including professional retraining; and
- 12 month veterinary care for illnesses and injuries likely to have been caused by their involvement in horseracing or due to poor breeding

Other requirements:

- Maintenance of a database of ex-racehorses with details of current and previous owners and medical history;
- Transfer of ownership to only occur via the newly formed body;
- Mandatory requirement that all retired horses are surrendered to the rehoming program unless they are appropriately re-homed within a reasonable timeframe after being retired. Harsh penalties should be applied to owners who fail to take reasonable care in re-homing their horses;
- Potential owners properly screened and assessed for suitability including location where horses will be agisted; and
- Lifetime leases on re-homed horses which will give discretionary powers to repossess horses who are not being properly cared for

Reduce breeding

Australia is the second largest breeder of thoroughbred racehorses in the world (International Federation of Horse Racing Authorities, 2018). Tanner et al. (2012) estimated that nearly 54% of foals never race. This seems to indicate that there are a large percentage of horses being bred who are particularly unsuitable for racing, which affects their longevity, predisposes them to injury and affects their ability to be re-homed either prior to or at the conclusion of their time used for racing.

Funding

1% Levy on Betting Turnover

CPR proposes that a 1% levy be placed on all betting turnover. Therefore, each dollar gambled on horseracing will provide one cent towards a national rehabilitation and retirement program – a superannuation fund for horses. The betting turnover currently on horseracing is \$21 billion, meaning that this initiative would raise \$210 million per annum (Racing Australia, 2019, Table 73).

1% Levy of Prizemoney

The prizemoney earned by winning racehorses is distributed to the owner, trainer and jockey. The racehorse, the most important participant, receives nothing. Therefore, CPR proposes that at least 1% of prizemoney is allocated to boost funding for the racehorse superannuation fund – this currently equates to approximately \$7.29 million annually (Racing Australia, 2019, Table 53).

Foal Registration Levy

CPR believes that a disincentive needs to be created to reduce the number of horses bred each year, especially horses with “poor” bloodlines that are unlikely to be successful. This could be achieved by placing a significant levy (>\$2000.00) on the registration of all thoroughbred foals that would discourage indiscriminate breeding while at the same time raise further funding for the retirement program. The current breeding of 13,000 foals would generate **\$26 million**.

Re-homing Incentive Scheme

Owners should be encouraged to find homes for their horses rather than using the rehabilitation program as a dumping ground. As an incentive, current owners of ex-racehorses could be reimbursed 50% of the foal registration levy after 12 months of the horse’s retirement and the remaining 50% again at 24 months.

This would be subject to a vet inspection on each occasion to ensure the horse is being properly cared for. This would reduce the burden on the rehabilitation

program while also rewarding responsible owners.

The amount that owners would be reimbursed is dependent on the foal registration levy. The levy amount would need to be enough to discourage excessive breeding while at the same time, be enough to encourage current or new owners to look after their horses.

Transfer of Ownership Levy

Racehorses may be bought and sold several times during their racing careers. All owners invest in the potential for financial gain and should therefore also contribute to their upkeep after their time used in racing is over. CPR suggests that a levy be introduced which is payable by each new owner or syndicate. CPR estimated in 2013 that across approximately 10,000 transfers per year at \$500 per transfer, \$5 million could easily be raised.

Based on the above levies and the current betting turnover, **\$248.29 million** would be raised each year towards rehabilitation and rehoming.

ISSUE 5 Regulation

Is the current horse welfare regulatory framework adequate?

What improvements could be made to the legislation?

Do we need national animal welfare standards and guidelines for horses?

Do we need more effective monitoring and enforcement of current horse welfare legislation?

Legislation exists but is inconsistent and fails to protect horses.

Currently horses are not classified as either livestock or a domestic animal and as a result, 'fall through the cracks' and are not protected by legislation. New federal legislation needs to be introduced that specifically covers horses in Australia. This could form part of the National Horse Traceability Scheme that has been proposed.

It can be argued that racing inflicts cruelty to thoroughbreds on a regular basis. For example, whipping is an industry-wide accepted practice for every horse in every race, which causes them fear and pain, pushing them beyond their physical limits. The number of "breakdowns" in two and three-year-old horses is evidence that horses are regularly overworked. They are also forced to race in

extreme heat and cold weather. Jumps racing is banned in NSW under animal cruelty legislation yet persists in South Australia and Victoria.

NSW Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act
(similar acts exist in all other states and territories of Australia)

Section 4, Part 1 (2) of the NSW Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, defines cruelty as:

“an act of cruelty committed upon an animal includes a reference to any act or omission as a consequence of which the animal is unreasonably, unnecessarily, or unjustifiably:

- a) Beaten, kicked, killed, wounded, pinioned, mutilated, maimed, abused, tormented, tortured, terrified or infuriated*
- b) overloaded, overworked, over-driven, over-ridden or overused*
- c) exposed to excessive heat or excessive cold, or*
- d) inflicted with pain (the definition of “pain” under the Act includes “suffering and distress”)*

These acts of cruelty are perpetrated against racehorses throughout the racing industry as standard industry practice.

Implementing welfare changes like banning the use of whips would mean horses would suffer fewer injuries.

In a submission CPR made to the racing industry in 2017 here regarding the phasing out of whips, it suggested that whip free races could be introduced with higher prize money to attract competitors. This would be a way of introducing this concept to an industry that is very resistant to change especially when it is forced upon it.

Racing participants need to see that eliminating the whip is not a threat to the industry. It is in fact enhancing it.

If horses were allowed to run on their own merits without the threat of being whipped and the use of spurs, tongue ties and cruel bits, they would not be forced to push themselves beyond their physical limits and thereby reduce the risk of injury.

Additionally, as also stated in the NSW Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, Section 13, with similar acts in other states:

A person shall not

- (a) ride, drive, use, carry or convey an animal, or*
- (b) where the person is a person in charge of an animal--authorise the riding, driving, using, carrying or conveying of the animal,*

if the animal is unfit for the purpose of its being so ridden, driven, used, carried or conveyed.

"I could go into a stable, any stable, and pull out half their horses that shouldn't be racing".

Peter Kerkenezov BM

Former Racing Industry Vet of 50 years
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ISSUE 6 Humane Horse Processing Facilities

If there were adequate and enforceable provisions that ensured horses at processing facilities were treated in a humane and ethical manner, would you consider the processing of horses for pet food and/or human consumption acceptable?

What is the world's best practice for humane operation of horse processing facilities?

What are the key considerations for the safe and humane euthanasia of a horse?

Are mobile, on farm, horse processing facilities a feasible option?
If processing horses at an abattoir or knackery is not acceptable, how should these horses be managed?

If all the world's best practices were implemented for "processing" unwanted racehorses, the reality remains that horses are being killed against their wishes and it could never be considered humane or ethical. The racing industry creates the problem and the racing industry must provide for them - not send them to slaughter out of convenience.

"Humane horse processing facilities" is an offensive title for what is the result of poor management, animal exploitation and over breeding by the racing industry.

The Martin Report was scathing of the treatment of racehorses and its findings should provide an insight for this committee (Martin & Reid, 2020).

CPR's Summary of the Martin Report

The resulting 94-page document of the Martin Report, unsurprisingly, reveals damning evidence of an industry and government at both the state and national

level that is failing both horses used by the racing industry, and animal welfare in general, miserably.

“The Final Race brutally educated the public that, on a large scale, retired racing horses are being treated as disposable commodities.” -Terry Martin SC

Perhaps the most damning comment from the inquiry....

The grim reality is that, even with the introduction of a Queensland racing industry rehoming program to complement the current and hugely commendable rehoming work of individuals and organisations from within the racing community and the broader community, a significant number of healthy retired racing horses will have an early death. The only options then are euthanasia or the slaughter establishments. Whilst on-farm euthanasia is an ideal end of life outcome, the number of horses, currently, are too high, the size of Queensland too vast, the number of veterinarians too few and the cost of euthanasia and burial too great, to expect that it would be the total answer.

Other key comments from the report are below (with CPR notes):

**The breeding of horses for racing is indiscriminate.*

** The breeding of horses for racing in Australia is largely unregulated and undertaken with little regard for the size of the problem being created at the end of their careers.*

**The racing industry in Australia, in general, has fundamentally failed to intervene at industry level to effectively protect retired racing horses.*

** The current Code lacks standards for the design of horse-specific slaughter establishments to make the slaughter of horses humane*

** Poor compliance with requirements to notify control bodies of the retirement or death of racing horses undermines all attempts to calculate the number of racing horses retiring each year that require aftercare and the true destination of those horses.*

** The management of racing horses as a disposable commodity is plainly unethical and not aligned with the expectations of the community upon whose acceptance, the social licence of racing depends.*

** The use of slaughter establishments as an end of life option for retired racing horses must be a last resort. Amendments to the rules of racing to require the owner of a horse to rehome that horse upon retirement should be pursued to ensure this is the case. Even when a horse is found to be unsuitable for rehoming, preference should be given to on-farm euthanasia,*

conducted by, or under the supervision of, a qualified veterinary professional.

CPR: We believe all horses are suitable for re-homing if given the proper attention, rehabilitation and care through a patient process. The industry participant should be required to fund such a process and if they cannot afford to, the racing authorities should, and the participant should not be accepted as a participant in future. Killing them out of expediency should never be an option. Even so, if this scenario must persist, backyard 'euthanasia' should be essential, not a 'preference'.

** The Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Livestock at Slaughtering Establishments is voluntary and outdated, but most importantly, it fails to provide for appropriate establishment design to achieve humane slaughter of horses.*

** Poor design of slaughter establishments, inappropriate handling of horses such as using loud noises to move horses, allowing horses to see and hear other horses being stunned or shot and smell blood immediately before slaughter, are all factors that lead to poor welfare outcomes for horses and are not prevented under current legislation.*

** Electric prodders are not appropriate for use on horses. Queensland animal welfare legislation should be consistent with the standards set in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code which rejects the use of electric goads and prods on horses and the EU Council Regulation that prohibits the use of prods or other implements with pointed ends on all animals.*

** The Australian Meat Standard is outdated and has limited specific welfare provisions for horses.*

** Given this is an environment which poses significant risks to the welfare of horses, and the animal welfare problem at Meramist is cultural, a Biosecurity Queensland Inspector should be present during unloading and slaughter of horses.*

CPR: Studies show a slaughterhouse worker must detach from their natural inclinations of empathy to do such work. From what CPR has witnessed, this "culture" is inherent to the framework of the majority of slaughterhouses.

**The importance of animal welfare within Biosecurity Queensland needs to be elevated to demonstrate the Queensland Government's commitment to not only the welfare of horses at establishments but also the welfare of all animals in Queensland.*

** Biosecurity Inspectors who work within the animal biosecurity and welfare program have a dual role, which can create a conflict or a perceived conflict of interest between the welfare of animals and the interests of persons whose livelihoods are dependent on animals.*

CPR: The conflict of interest of Biosecurity and their inability to effectively carry out their duties in animal welfare have been long highlighted by Animal Liberation QLD. View [here](#). Their failings are substantial and have led to prolonged pain and suffering of countless animals. So long as such industries exist, an Independent Animal Protection Agency and a federal Animal Rights Commission as advocated by the Animal Justice Party, whose primary purpose is to ensure the well-being of all animals, is what is required.

** Awaiting the completion of the national review of the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Livestock at Slaughtering Establishments, rather than moving forward with recommendation 10.2.1, will mean that many thousands more horses will be unnecessarily slaughtered inhumanely.*

CPR: We find this absolutely unacceptable. Meramist should have been immediately shutdown and should remain so.

** While some jurisdictions are currently developing plans for the welfare and rehoming of retired racing horses, only New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, pursuant to Local Rule 114, has specific regulation for the welfare of retired racing horses.*

CPR: As ABC's 7:30 exposed, these regulations are not being policed and therefore not enforced. Furthermore, not a single prosecution has taken place since the implementation of the new NSW regulations.

Recommendations

Below are just some of the recommendations coming from the inquiry that we feel must be highlighted, along with some comments where we feel necessary:

** ...introduce a welfare levy to be added to the current foal birth notification and stallion return fees. The size of this levy be sufficient to act as a deterrent to indiscriminate and poor quality breeding*

CPR: We have long proposed a foal levy. This will help to discourage indiscriminate breeding which results in high numbers of horses existing who are unable to be cared for. Ultimately such a levy will result in fewer horses being born to suffer both the life of being used as a racehorse and the impacts of being discarded or neglected.

** Industry participants have a continuing obligation to notify the national bodies of the retired horse's ultimate retirement destination from the care of the racing industry participant. Participants also be required to provide notification of the fact and cause of death of the retired racing horse while in their care.*

CPR: There is still no requirement for an industry participant to remain responsible for keeping track of a horse beyond the initial rehoming location. There is also no requirement for a registered veterinarian to confirm the cause of

death of a retired horse while in their care or after, meaning a horse could easily be taken down the back of a paddock and shot without any traceability or accountability. Anecdotal evidence from industry employees suggests this is not uncommon.

** The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries takes steps to amend the Racing Integrity Act 2016 to extend the QRIC's animal welfare jurisdiction to a horse retired from racing, but still in the care of a registered or licensed person under the Australian Rules of Racing or Australian Harness Rules of Racing.*

** Amendments to clarify that Biosecurity Queensland and the RSPCA remain responsible for the welfare of retired racing horses not in the care of a licensed or registered industry participant.*

CPR: This would be welcome news if we felt Biosecurity QLD were capable and motivated enough to make animal welfare a priority. Their track record proves otherwise due to conflict of interest and poor animal welfare and investigative knowledge (as noted above by the inquiry). We acknowledge the inquiry makes recommendations to address this issue but, ultimately, what is required here is what is proposed by the Animal Justice Party, a well-resourced state-based Independent Animal Protection Agency and a federal Animal Rights Commission whose primary purpose is to ensure the well-being of all animals.

** The QRIC commits more resources to the active enforcement of retirement notifications including the auditing of 'high-risk' categories such as racing horses that have been 'spelling' for more than 12 months and horses that are still registered but have not had a race start in the last 12 months.*

CPR: This is welcome news. Records show countless horses who have been spelling for years. The industry currently has no idea where any of these horses are. If enforced this could help towards more horses being accounted for.

**The QRIC develops a penalty standard for the failure to provide timely retirement and death notifications that reflects the critical role they play in monitoring the welfare of retired racing horses.*

CPR: Welcome news. To date the completion of this form has been labelled as compulsory. However no penalties have applied for non-compliance, therefore making it completely ineffective.

**Racing Queensland establishes and governs a retraining/rehoming program for Thoroughbred and Standardbred horses, bred for the racing industry, and domiciled in Queensland at the time of their retirement.*

**The Off The Track program contain provision for horses that are bred for racing but never make it to the track. Although these horses are not 'retired racing horses' and do not therefore fall within the official scope of the Inquiry, they have been identified as the first point of potential 'wastage' for the*

industry and it would be careless of the Inquiry not to take the opportunity to promote their interests. Further, it would be indefensible for the industry not to do something to ensure they are given the opportunity of a long and healthy life.

CPR: We welcome that the inquiry has recognised the many horses who vanish every year before ever making it to the track.

** Racing Queensland advocates for Racing Australia and Harness Racing Australia to adopt national rules of racing requiring the owner of a horse to rehome it upon retirement.*

** The owner must make two genuine attempts to rehome a horse before the owner is permitted to submit it to Queensland's official Off the Track program.*

CPR: An owner has never been required to rehome a racehorse before so this is very welcome news. However, there is no requirement for the new owner to care for the horse by racing industry regulations and therefore the horse can still be sent to slaughter.

** An owner is exempt from rehoming obligations if the horse is unsuitable for rehoming whether because of age, injury, sickness or temperament.*

CPR: Temperament concerns and lameness are a common occurrence for horses coming out of the racing industry. So long as they are not suffering in a way that cannot be addressed, rehabilitation and rehoming should be a compulsory requirement.

** in the event the horse is not accepted into Queensland's official Off the Track program, the owner may euthanase the horse or send it to a slaughter establishment, with slaughter being the option of last resort.*

CPR: It is unclear what would make a horse not qualify for the OTT program. Again, slaughter should never be an option.

** The QRIC publishes annual injury, death, euthanasia, slaughter and retirement data for racing and retired Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds on its website.*

** Biosecurity Queensland publishes annual data on its website detailing the number of animal welfare complaints and investigations (by type) it manages and the investigation outcomes achieved.*

** Racing Queensland publishes data on its website of the number of horses accepted, retrained, rehomed, euthanased or sent to slaughter through the Off the Track program.*

CPR: We very much welcome this transparency for all three above recommendations. However, we would like to see the relevant bodies regularly

audited to ensure the data being published is accurate. * *The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Queensland) takes steps to amend the ACPA to provide that establishment management store for at least 30 days the CCTV footage recorded at all critical animal welfare points and make available the recorded footage to Biosecurity Queensland upon request on 48 hours' notice.*

CPR: We believe slaughterhouse CCTV should also be publicly available so that the public can make a decision as to whether they still want to support the industry or not.

Breeding

The inquiry also acknowledged the discarding of foals who never make it to the track and the many other issues associated with breeding. Some of particular note:

Foals born but never declared, foals that never make it into training and unnamed horses sold through yearling sales and online auctions were all highlighted as at high-risk of poor welfare outcomes because they are unwanted. They also represent another gap in the racing industry's knowledge of where the horses they breed end up. It is apparent that better traceability and welfare controls for horses not yet registered to race is another issue the racing industry should be giving particular attention to.

It is submitted that the breeding of horses for racing in Australia is a 'numbers game' driven by a preoccupation with quantity rather than quality. The result, it is said, is more horses being bred than will ever make it to racing and many more than could ever be appropriately rehomed.

There do not appear to be fees associated with registration as a breeder, any checks on the suitability or competency of the applicant as a breeder, or limits placed on the number of foals produced in a year.

And later,

Importantly, no actual assessment is made of a breeder's competency or ability either.

It was also noted that none of the authorities have a position on the number of foals that should be born each year to maintain the industry but not create wastage and issues with rehoming. It is abundantly clear that the current state of play across the country is to breed as many foals as possible, to increase the chances of producing the next big winner. This is without any concern for the many others who are born into the industry but don't have the desirable attributes and serve no purpose.

Racing Queensland suggests that this data support a view that any restrictions on breeding would not enhance animal welfare outcomes. The Inquiry does not agree.

It remains that the number of horses entering the industry will ultimately determine the number requiring a decent retirement outcome in the future. The Inquiry has found very little evidence that this has been taken into account in establishing breeding frameworks and incentive programs.

The Inquiry notes that the numbers of horses bred each year approximately matches the number of horses retired and needing to be rehomed. The Queensland racing industry contributes approximately 2000 horses of the national number of 13000 who require rehoming every year. Yet the racing industry continues to claim they do not have an over-breeding problem. We are thankful the inquiry has noted that they most certainly do.

Breeders have no licensing requirements whilst so many others in the industry do. The Inquiry noted: *In interview, representatives from Thoroughbred Breeders Australia argued that breeders should be subject to an industry quality assurance scheme rather than regulation. However, it is the Inquiry's view that the rigour of licensing is necessary.*

Also of note:

Under the existing retirement and death notification requirements, a racing horse could be officially retired into a socially desirable retirement category, remain in the care of a licensed or registered person, and then be euthanased or sent, promptly or eventually, to an abattoir without this fact ever appearing in the official figures of the racing industry.

The written submission provided by Meramist Pty Ltd advises that the abattoir processes approximately 10,000 horses a year. Together, these figures indicate that the 4000-5000 figure suggested by 7.30 may be reasonable.

ISSUE 7 Research, Development and Education

What research is the highest priority to improve the life-long welfare of thoroughbred horses?

How should this research be funded?

What body or groups should be responsible for setting these research priorities?

How can the thoroughbred industry educate external stakeholders on its welfare initiatives?

The primary research concern is horse welfare, where “welfare” means that actions have a real benefit for the horse.

To date, it appears that the nature of research regarding racing is to perpetuate existing industry standards, and to make sure as much as possible can be extracted by the horse, by making them run longer, or under more intense use.

If the industry is serious about animal welfare, and of assuring the public of its intentions, then it must take action on the numerous welfare issues that exist and are already well known.

At present, industry practices cause injury, breakdown and early death of horses. To push them well past their limits and then claim; 'it was just an accident' is exploitation for the sake of profit.

Until the industry is prepared to step back and change the culture then nothing will change and all of this is just another delaying tactic designed to fool the public into believing that the racing industry actually cares for its horses.

Some of the known welfare issues include:

- **Jumps Racing** - Jumps races are twenty times more dangerous than flat races. On average, 1:30 jumps horses will be killed on track every year. Approximately 50% of jumps horses are replaced every year
- **2-Year-Old Racing** – Horses are not fully developed until around 5 years of age. Racing under-developed horses makes them prone to injury
- **Confinement** - Racehorses in training are typically kept in a box for up to 22 hours per day in isolation that can result in psychological damage
- **Unnatural diet** - Horses are fed an unnatural high protein diet designed to build muscle mass at the expense of their wellbeing. As a result 90% suffer from stomach ulcers.
- **Whips** - These used to push horses to well beyond their physical limits **when** they are tiring and therefore more prone to serious injury
- **EIPH** - As a result of being pushed too far, 90% of racehorses suffer from bleeding in the lungs, known as Exercise Induced Pulmonary-Haemorrhage
- **Racing in the heat** – Horses are forced to race in extreme temperatures. CPR has been present at tracks when horses are still being raced in 43 degree heat
- **Pushed too far** - Horses are trained through learned helplessness techniques to keep running even when exhausted
- **Negative Reinforcement** - The use of pain and fear of pain to control the horse rather than the horse being a willing participant
- **Insufficient recovery times** - Though it has been well documented in studies, not enough time is given to allow horses to recover from injuries which causes them to eventually break down
- **Insufficient policing of the rules** - Strict rules are in place to protect the racehorse. However, they are not properly policed. Those who report breaches are more likely to be penalised than the perpetrator
- **Insufficient penalties** - Penalties are not enough to act as a deterrent

- **Wastage** - Horses ending up at a knackery or slaughterhouse rather than being re-homed
- **Lack of traceability and accountability** - Horses are not traced after they leave racing and are often listed as being retired or re-homed when in reality have been slaughtered at a knackery or slaughterhouse.
- **Lack of transparency** - While the racing industry repeatedly claims to be open and transparent, CPR's experience is the exact opposite.

One of the main contenders for education are the members of the racing industry: owners, trainers, track staff and regulators.

Funding for research

The Australian Research Council and various gambling research centres that already exist could be accessed to fund the research through reputable and independent institutions.

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