

The slaughter of Thoroughbred and Standardbred racehorses in Australia: an estimate of the numbers killed for human consumption.

Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses (CPR)

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Introduction

Wastage, which refers to the exit or retirement of a horse from racing, is known to be a feature of Thoroughbred racing throughout the world (Bailey et al., 1997; Bourke, 1995). The racing industry and activist groups have debated for several years, the number of exiting horses, and their fate, but to date, the racing industry has not provided definitive figures of its wastage. Reports from activist groups and the media have alerted the public to horse slaughter in Australia and the United Kingdom (Barnett, 2006), with one article referring to it as, "the unofficial economic partnership of the racehorse breeding and horse slaughter industries" (Clifton, 2015). Over breeding, animal welfare, wastage and questions about the fate of retired racehorses are some of the serious issues that are challenging the racing industry's reputation and social licence. Studies show that the public has become more sensitive to the use of animals for any purpose, and is less approving of industries that use animals for entertainment, compared with their use for food and medical testing (Byrd et al., 2017). The idea that racehorses are used for entertainment and to enable gambling and are then slaughtered when they are no longer profitable is unacceptable to many people.

The Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses (CPR) believes that it is in the public interest to know what is happening to racehorses in Australia. The *Final Report of the Select Committee On Jumps Racing* (2016) in South Australia, recommended that jumps racing continue, but only under particular circumstances. In the report, the following recommendations were made.

Recommendation 18:

*The Committee recommends that the industry make public all relevant information for each individual horse during its lifetime, including all injuries and deaths in training, trials, races and, at any time, and full details of the fate of horses, including detailed reporting on proposed use, **such as slaughter**, recreational riding and retirement to pasture (Parliament of South Australia, 2016, p. 13).*

Recommendation 25:

*The Committee recommends that the industry consider implementing a register or index of jumps horses to enable detailed statistical data to be collected on their fate and to determine the proportion of **horses that are registered to race that go***

to slaughter. *In the interests of achieving greater transparency and accountability, the committee recommends that the industry make this data publicly available*
(Parliament of South Australia, 2016, p. 14).

CPR notes that because almost all Thoroughbred racehorses are likely to be considered for jumps racing, the requirements stated above should be applied to the whole racing industry in Australia.

The aim of this study

There is currently no definitive information available regarding the number of racehorses sent to slaughter in Australia for human consumption. CPR has prepared this report to fill this information gap.

In Australia there are approximately 30 knackeries that slaughter horses for pet food, and two abattoirs that kill for human consumption of horsemeat. Most horsemeat for human consumption is exported, and although the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) records the numbers of horses processed, the information is classed as “commercial-in-confidence” and is therefore unavailable to the public (Doughty, 2008). In addition, different types of horses may be slaughtered at a plant on any one day (including Thoroughbreds, Standardbreds, Warmbloods, Stockhorses, Arabians, Quarter horses, donkeys) but export reports contain only the aggregated numbers of all types.

In the absence of information forthcoming from AQIS, abattoirs, knackeries, and the racing industry, the only way to determine the number of racehorses sent to slaughter is to identify them at the slaughterhouse.

This study reports the results of research carried out over ten days of horse slaughter at one Australian abattoir.



Racehorses awaiting slaughter at Meramist slaughterhouse in Caboolture QLD

Racehorse wastage in Australia

Estimating the numbers of retired racehorses

One of the debates surrounding wastage in Thoroughbred racing is the number of horses that are retired each year. In the absence of direct information by the racing industry, some attempts to estimate wastage have been made. Bourke (1995) estimated that more than one third leave racing each year. From data they collected from trainers for the 2002/2003 year, Thomson et al., (2014) calculated an exit rate of 39.7% for Thoroughbreds (TB) and 38.7% for Standardbreds (SB). Applying these rates to industry data for the 1998/1999 year, they estimated that 12,400 TB and 5,300 SB would have left racing. Although they reduced these figures to 10,300 TB and 3,800 SB (totalling 14,100 racehorses) in order to account for transfers between training stables, the study noted that this was likely to be an underestimate. Table 1 provides CPR's broad estimate of wastage for the past six years, and shows that approximately 12,000 TB may leave racing in Australia each year.

Table 1 Estimate of Thoroughbred wastage in Australia

A	B	C	D	E	F	*G
Season	Indiv horses start of season	Foals	Registrations	Indiv horses end of season	Estimated wastage	Estimated wastage %
2017/18	28,639	12,898	11,177	28,185	11,631	40.6
2016/17	29,401	13,012	11,325	28,639	12,087	41.1
2015/16	29,793	12,836	11,616	29,401	12,008	40.3
2014/15	30,229	12,985	11,833	29,793	12,269	40.6
2013/14	30,489	13,796	12,483	30,229	12,743	41.8
2012/13	30,757	14,518	12,707	30,489	12,975	42.2

Source: Racing Australia Fact Book 2018/19; Tables 21, 37, 58.

Wastage calculated as (Columns B + D – E).

*The estimated wastage figure does not include the foals born into the industry each year that are not registered to race, therefore it is likely this wastage figure is underestimated.

It is very difficult to find exact figures of the number of mares being entered into and taken out of the breeding cycle at any one time. Renee Geelan (2014) claims that approximately 3,000 horses enter the breeding cycle each year. There appears to be nothing else to support the accuracy of this figure. These horses make up part of the estimated wastage figure in Table 1.

Table 2 Broodmares Australia

Year	Total	Year	Total
2017/18	19,915	2012/13	24,300
2016/17	20,896	2011/12	25,786
2015/16	20,252	2010/11	27,063
2014/15	21,819	2009/10	28,393
2013/14	22,921	2008/09	29,332

Source: Adapted from Racing Australia Fact book 2018/19 (2018) Table 25

Table 2 shows that the number of mares in the breeding cycle has been consistently dropping by approximately 1,000 every year, meaning overall approximately 4,000 horses (majority mares) are being taken out of breeding each year. Like all other horses in the racing industry, broodmares' wellbeing or whereabouts is unknown as they are unaccounted for by the racing industry. These broodmares having been raced and then bred from, often for a number of years, are often viewed as unsuitable candidates for re-homing and are therefore very likely destined for slaughter.

We note that the statistics provided in the Australian Racing Fact Book vary in each annual publication for the years that have already been completed. There is no reason why they would change – it is historical data, nevertheless no explanation is given. This brings into question the integrity of the records kept by the Australian Stud Book.



Mares and foals at an Australian Thoroughbred stud in the Hunter Valley

The fate of retired racehorses

In Racing Australia's Annual Report, the CEO stated that retiring horses from 2017/2018 were sent to the following destinations:

64%	<i>Equestrian</i>
23%	<i>Breeding</i>
1%	<i>Livestock sale</i>
<1%	<i>Retirement blank</i>
1%	<i>Other</i>
4%	<i>Died natural causes</i>
6%	<i>Euthanised</i>
<1%	<i>Abattoir</i>

(Racing Australia, 2018, p. 15).

Notably, these estimates do not mention the slaughter of horses at knackeries. Hayek (2004) questioned the capacity of Australian society to provide the space, finance and skill to care for the large surplus of horses exiting racing. A simple calculation can illustrate this point. Presuming that 12,000 TB retire each year (Table 1) this would mean that after only five years, 60,000 horses would have been released into a relatively small market. Taking into account the CEO's estimate (see above) that approximately 10% die one way or another each year, and considering that most horses retire at about five years of age and can possibly live another 20 years, then 56,200 TB could still be alive after five years. This number is in addition to the number of unregistered Thoroughbreds that are unaccounted for, as well as other types of horses such as SB that are also seeking access to the same retirement market.

Hayek also observed that racehorses do not necessarily have the behavioural traits that are desired for much pleasure riding, and that Standardbred horses in particular, have a stigma attached to them because of their gait and have fewer rehoming options than Thoroughbreds (Hayek, 2004). The study concluded that:

The horsemeat industry, therefore, is an important destination for horses leaving the racehorse industry. Slaughterhouses appear to provide the only practical choice for the large numbers of horses leaving the racing and breeding industries. This is because the other horse industries, such as equestrian enterprises are considerably smaller than the racing and breeding, and so are unable to absorb the large numbers of surplus horses (Hayek, 2004, p. 90).

The racing industry keeps records of individual TB horses during their time used for racing, and can provide detailed accounts of their various owners, trainers, winnings, racing history and genetic background. However, the industry has no record or adequate, systematic means of tracking a horse's whereabouts and his/her welfare when not racing, especially following retirement. The industry recently required that details of every exiting horse be recorded on a "Retirement of Racehorses or Death Notification Form" (AR64J) (Racing Australia 2016b), with the form requiring submission within one month. Information about the new owner and the location where the horse will be kept, have been recently added to the form. Notably, the option for "Sent to Abattoir" on the form, has been removed. The industry claims that this now provides reliable information on retiring horses even though there is no way to inform Racing Australia a horse was sent to an abattoir or knackery even if the registered owner wanted to. Additionally, the "system" has still not dealt with the problem of tracking horses any further than the initial

transfer. For example, a horse may be recorded as being transferred out of racing and re-homed to a pony club, or sold at auction, but then sold two years later, or indeed, the next day, moved on to a kill buyer where he/she will be sent to slaughter. Advice to owners in the "FAQ" section (*New Foal and Owner Registration Rules*) is below.

*"When you transfer your ownership interest in a Thoroughbred horse (including for recreational purposes) to another person, you are **discharged from your responsibilities** for the horse if you have formally notified Racing Australia of the change of ownership by way of the appropriate transfer form and notified the new owner of those responsibilities" (Racing Australia, 2016b, p. 4).*

It is unclear how the responsibilities of any new owner outside the racing industry can be policed, and how the horse's welfare can be verified. In addition, some categories of horses, such as broodmares (mares used for breeding) are recorded as having gone into breeding, but no records are kept of when they exit the breeding cycle. Their fate is not recorded and not accounted for in any statistics.

Unnamed/unraced Thoroughbred horses

Until very recently, unraced foals were not registered at all. Even now, the fate of many foals is unclear as breeders have up to 30 days to register a foal (on the Mare Return). The Australian Stud Book at its sole discretion may extend this time to 120 days. This allows breeders and owners additional time to decide if the horse has the potential to race and if not, could declare the horse still born/died at birth etc. therefore avoiding becoming a recordable statistic. Once registered, foals only need to be named if they are going to be raced. A foal that is not named and therefore cannot be raced, must be officially "retired" using the retirement form.

Missing drop numbers

Foals are normally numbered in chronological sequence of their birth from the stud where they were born. That is, the first-born foal will have a drop number of 1. This is the upper number branded on the horse's off shoulder. The lower number represents the year. The frequent number of missing foal drop numbers in the Australian Stud book seems to suggest that some foals may have died not long after birth or they may have

been deemed unviable before being registered and were therefore discarded, thus avoiding appearing in any official statistics. Anecdotal information received from former employees at some studs indicates that this is the case.

Insufficient penalties for non-compliance

Penalties for non-compliance with the retirement rules are not specified, however a recent case suggests the fines may be neither sufficient to deter wrongdoing, nor adequate to assure the public of the industry's sincerity in protecting its horses. As an example, in 2018, A NSW trainer was fined only \$750 for failing to comply with AR64J(1) regarding the death and disposal of a horse. Apparently, the horse had died at the trainer's stables but there was no veterinary certificate to advise the cause of death and the trainer disposed of the animal without written permission from Racing NSW. In the same case, a \$1,000 fine and a three month's suspension of training licence, was issued for insulting and improper behaviour towards two of the Stewards (Thoroughbred News, 2018).

Racehorse slaughter at knackeries in Australia

Hayek's (2004) research was the first study to attempt to estimate the scale of racehorses sent to slaughter at Australian knackeries. This was a rigorous study that used a random sampling method, and sourced information using telephone interviews and questionnaires with knackery managers and trainers. Information from the interviews suggested that knackeries cater to older, sick and injured horses, and younger horses whose owners were no longer willing or able to pay to keep them – such as racehorses. More than any other horses, those with “unsuitable temperament/behaviour” were more likely to enter knackeries than those horses leaving for any other reason (Hayek, 2004, p. 70).

In Hayek's (2004, p. 88) study, trainers reported that 6.30% of racing TB and 16.56% of racing SB, as well as 11.43% of TB breeding horses, and 43.75% of SB breeding horses, left their stables and entered a knackery. Hayek's (2004, p. 88) data suggested that for the 2002/2003 year, the number of racehorses going to knackeries as their first (and last) destination, totalled 5,200, (1,550 TB and 3,650 SB), but considered this an underestimate as it was based only on officially registered horses, and did not include horses that left

racing for other initial destinations. Hayek (2004) calculated that on-selling from auctions could add another 2,100 TB and 3,800 SB giving a total annual slaughter of 11,100 racehorses.



Discarded foals awaiting slaughter

Racehorse slaughter at abattoirs in Australia

While most Australians are averse to eating horsemeat, it is very popular in European countries. According to the Humane Society International (HSI) (2014), Belgium plays a central role in the global horsemeat trade, being the biggest importer of horsemeat from outside the EU, which is then shipped on to other countries, particularly France, the Netherlands and Italy. The two abattoirs in Australia that kill horses are believed to be owned by Belgian companies (HSI, 2014). No information on the slaughter and export of racehorses is publicly available.

Using sources from Ramsay (1994), the Australian Bureau of Statistics and AQIS, Doughty (2008) calculated that in 2007, a total of 11,415 horses (including horses, asses, mules and hinnies) had been slaughtered at two abattoirs in Australia, to be exported for human consumption. The Humane Society International (HSI) report of horsemeat exports from

Australia from 2009 to 2013 shows a steady decline, but the value for 2013 is substantial at 1,147,630 euros (HSI, 2014).

Doughty et al. (2009) collected a sample at one Australian abattoir in 2007 and counted 340 horses slaughtered over three days of which 40% were TB ($n = 133$) and 13% were SB ($n = 43$). Extrapolation of these figures to one year, assuming a plant kills horses one day each week would be 3,050 (2,305 TB and 745 SB) for one abattoir.



Horses awaiting slaughter

Identifying the slaughtered Thoroughbreds

In their study of one abattoir, Doughty et al. (2009) determined that, in contrast to the older, sick and injured horses at knackeries, just over half the horses slaughtered were apparently healthy, less than seven years old and had come from the racing industry.

In the face of criticism about wastage and the death of horses on the racetrack, the racing industry has made an attempt to assure the public that its horses are well cared for. Terms such as “integrity”, “animal welfare” and “social licence” are now used by the industry to create an impression of care and well-being for racehorses.

Racing NSW is to be commended for its introduction of LR114, Equine Welfare, effective from 1 October 2017 (Racing NSW, 2017). In the *Rules of Racing NSW* (1 October, 2017)

the purpose of this rule was stated as being “to ensure the welfare of thoroughbred horses from birth, during their racing careers and on retirement” (Racing NSW, 2017, p. 200). Ongoing welfare requirements are specified for proper nutrition and water, exercise, stabling and veterinary treatment. In relation to the killing of retired horses, the rule states:

A registered owner, trainer or any person that is in charge of or has in is or here possession, control or custody of any horses (Eligible Horses, Unnamed Horses and Named Horses) is **not to euthanize or destroy a horse** (or permit a horse to be euthanized or destroyed) unless a registered veterinary surgeon has certified in writing that it would be necessary on welfare or safety grounds or for reasons approved in writing by Racing NSW or unless under extreme circumstances where it is necessary for a horse to be euthanized immediately and the decision is subsequently confirmed by a veterinary surgeon (Racing NSW, 2014, LR114 (4), p. 200).

Under LR114 (5, c) the **owners** “are to make all reasonable endeavours to find a home for that horse” and if they are unable to do so, then:

the horse is not to be, directly or indirectly, sent to an abattoir, knackery or similarly disposed of.
(Racing NSW, 2017, p. 201)



Thoroughbred at Camden Sales bought by a kill buyer

THE STUDY

This study is reported below in two parts:

Part 1 provides an estimate of the number of racehorses (TB and SB) slaughtered at one Australian abattoir.

Part 2 provides evidence of individual slaughtered Thoroughbreds.

PART 1: ESTIMATING RACEHORSE SLAUGHTER

Method

CCTV footage collected from an abattoir that slaughters horses, including Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds for human consumption was used in this study. The slaughterhouse regularly kills and processes horses on one day per week however this can increase or decrease depending on available horses. The maximum capacity of the plant for a single day is 220 horses.

The process involves the horse entering the kill box one at a time from outside the building, after the previous horse has been removed. The horse is then given a captive bolt (CB) to the head. This does not always kill the horse, and in such cases a second and even a third CB will be given. Once the horse is deemed to be dead, he or she is shackled by the leg, hung upside down and further “processed”. This study did not deal with processing after the horses were taken from the slaughter room.

Up to seven CCTV cameras were used to simultaneously record the process of killing each horse. The horses were identified based on visibility of a horse's brand on the CCTV footage. In many cases, the brand was not visible on one camera, but clear on at least one of more of the others. In a similar technique to that used by Doughty et al. (2009, p. 809) Thoroughbreds were identified from a “2-part brand (stud brand/symbol and a sequence/age brand) placed above one or both shoulders”. Standardbreds are branded on their neck and are thus easily distinguishable from Thoroughbreds. It was determined that the majority of horses were Thoroughbreds, and as Doughty (2009) noted, these horses are more likely to be able to satisfy the high standards required by

an abattoir. In addition, observation of the horses being unloaded the previous day, also indicated that a large number were Thoroughbreds.

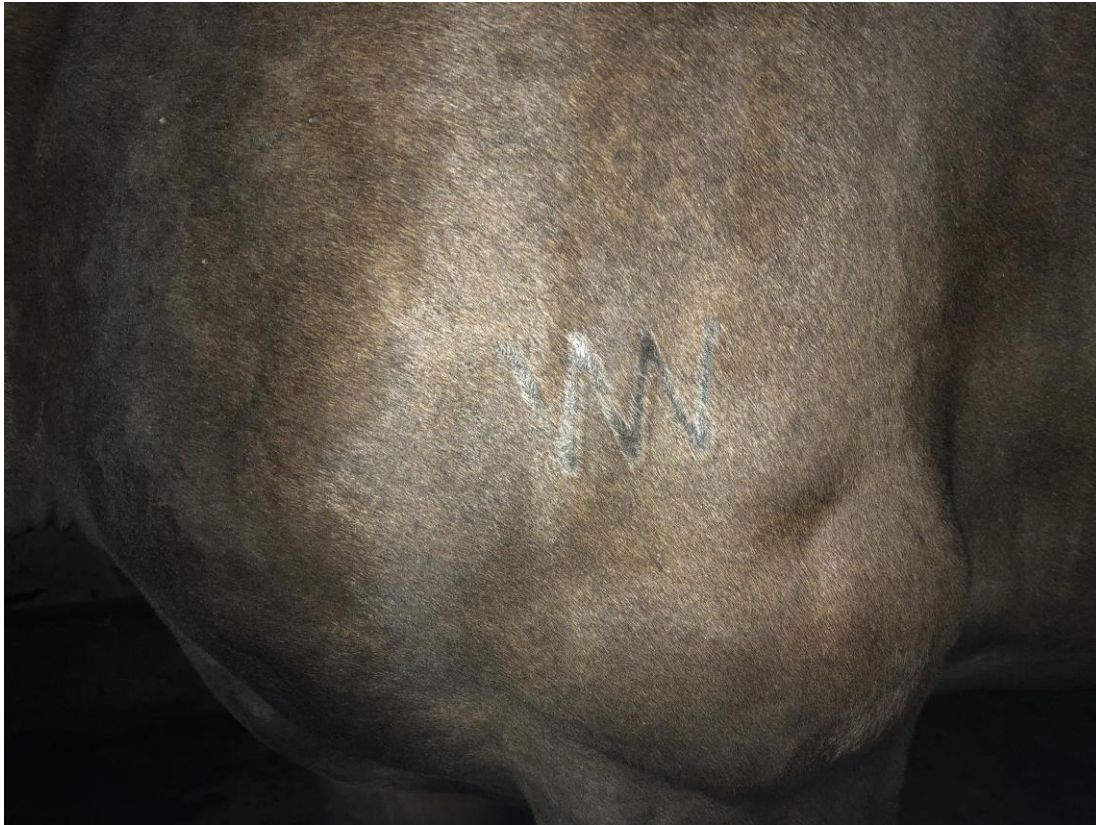
It is noted that stockhorses can also be branded in a similar way to TBs, however they can be generally identified by a person with reasonable equine knowledge. Though it is possible that a small number of stockhorses may have been mistaken for Thoroughbreds in this study, the number is likely to be extremely minor due to the unlikelihood of stock horses being sent to slaughter because they have a higher commercial value. It is also important to acknowledge that due to the limitations of the video evidence, it is estimated that a number of racehorses may not have been detected as a result of brands not being in view or visible.

The cameras were positioned around the kill box from an elevated position, within two to three metres of the horse at the front, back and side. To ensure the same horse was being identified across the cameras, information was observed and later recorded on a spreadsheet which allowed for comparisons to be made.

This information included:

- The brand;
- Brief description of the horse (colour, defining marks);
- Brief description of the process (such as the horse falling backwards, a second bolt being delivered); and
- Time markers on the footage.

In addition, a distinguishable horse (approximately every 10-15 horses) on the spreadsheet was checked across another camera to further confirm the same horse was being described from each camera. e.g. a paint horse, a horse who has fallen backwards, a horse who has a bloodied face etc. or any other distinguishable feature.



Thoroughbred brand

Identification was sorted into four categories:

- Confirmed TB – based on clear visibility of a brand on at least one camera;
- Confirmed SB – based on clear visibility of a brand on at least one camera;
- Possible racehorse – appearance of a brand but visibility could not confirm a racehorse; and
- Unable to determine identity due to brand not being in view or fast movement of horse.

Results

Estimating racehorse slaughter

The investigation involved video surveillance of the slaughterhouse on 22 days over a period of two years. It became apparent that a significant percentage of the horses were either Thoroughbreds or Standardbreds. To obtain the proof of the true numbers of racehorses killed on each day, surveillance cameras were positioned specifically to document the brands of both Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds.

Over ten separate kill days, data from CCTV cameras recorded 1,682 horses being slaughtered, of which 776 (46.1%) were confirmed with a high level of confidence as TB racehorses and 176 (10.5%) as SB. The identity of a further 142 (8.4%) as racehorses was deemed possible but unconfirmed, and the identity of 588 (35.0%) horses could not be determined (Table 3). At a minimum, 952 (56.6%) were confirmed as TB or SB racehorses, with up to 1,094 (65.0%) being possible racehorses.

Extrapolation of this data would give an estimate, based on an average 78 TB horses killed weekly, of 4,056 TB being slaughtered annually, and the average of 17 SB slaughtered weekly extends to 884 for one year. The data suggest that this slaughterhouse may process a total of 4,940 TB and SB racehorses each year. Assuming the second slaughterhouse operates in a similar way when operational, then the number of horses killed could double to a total of 9,880 (TB 8,112 and SB 1,768).



Thoroughbreds in a holding pen at an Australian slaughterhouse

Table 3 Observational data of horse slaughter from CCTV cameras (frequency and percentage)

Day	TB confirmed	SB confirmed	Total confirmed racehorse	Possible racehorse	Identity unable to be determined	Total
1	77 49.0	15 9.6	92 58.6	12 7.6	53 33.8	157 100%
2	74 63.8	2 1.7	76 65.6	12 10.3	28 24.1	116 100%
3	84 48.0	13 7.4	97 55.4	11 6.3	67 38.3	175 100%
4	76 46.6	8 4.9	84 51.5	14 8.6	65 39.9	163 100%
5	72 51.4	2 1.4	74 52.9	15 10.7	51 36.4	140 100%
6	74 40.0	37 20.0	111 60.0	16 8.6	58 31.4	185 100%
7	89 44.9	15 7.6	104 52.5	13 6.6	81 40.9	198 100%
8	82 50.6	9 5.6	91 56.2	8 4.9	63 38.9	162 100%
9	71 45.5	24 15.4	95 60.9	13 8.3	48 30.8	156 100%
10	77 33.5	51 22.2	128 55.7	28 12.2	74 32.2	230 100%
Total	776 46.1%	176 10.5%	952 56.6	142 8.4%	588 35.0%	1,682 100%
Average killed per day	78	17	95	14	59	168
Estimate for one year (1)	4,056	884	4940	728	3,068	8,736

Assumes horses are slaughtered one day per week for 52 weeks at one abattoir

Nature of the slaughter

Many horses were very frightened on entering the kill box and tried to avoid the captive bolt. For many of them, death was not instantaneous. On Day 1 for example, of the 157 horses killed, 11 (7.0%) had to be given more than one captive bolt before they were rendered unconscious. On average, about four of every hundred horses (and this ranged from less than one to nearly nineteen percent on the different days) required more than one captive bolt, with some needing three, four or more (Table 4).

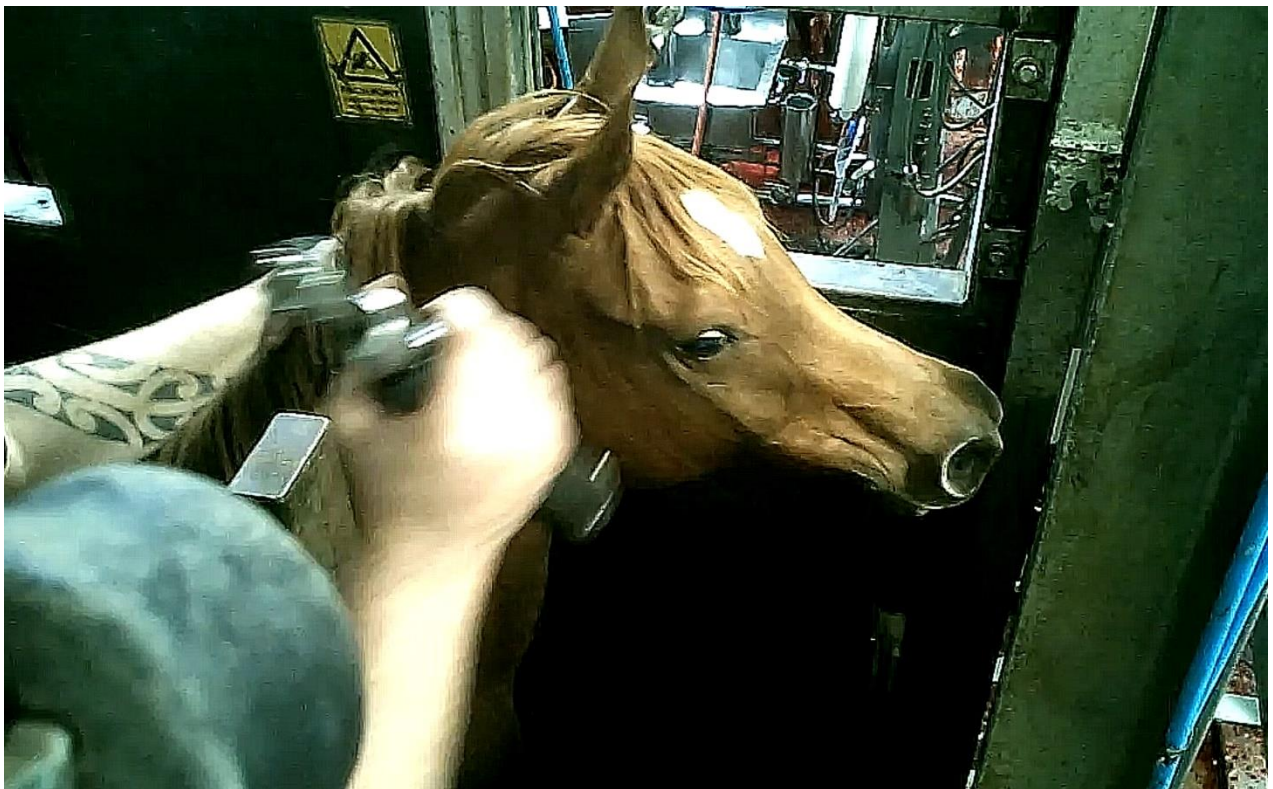
Whilst the focus of the report is not on the method and practices of the slaughterhouse, there are many recorded incidents of horses suffering unnecessarily moments before being killed.

- CB misfired several times, causing severe distress to the horse;
- Captive bolt gun not killing the horse on first attempt causing the horse to react violently;
- Several horses not killed by the captive bolt gun and then shackled and hung while their throats are slit, still apparently breathing;
- Electric prods used on horses who were reluctant to enter the kill box;
- A horse apparently stuck had his leg shackled while in the kill box and a winch used to force him forward. It resulted in the horse's leg breaking and a deep gash where the muscle was torn;
- A fallen horse dragged into the kill box with a winch;
- Horses able to see the horses before them being hung and having their throats slit;
- Horses with obvious lameness and other injuries being killed; and
- Horses being beaten and prodded with a poly pipe to make them move forward.

It is important to make the point that this information is not provided as a criticism of the slaughtermen. This is the "business as usual" process of horse slaughter. Slaughterhouses that kill animals for human consumption supposedly make use of the best available technology and standards. The video footage says nothing for any level of sophistication in the killing process, and challenges any claim that horse slaughter is, or could ever be humane, especially when considered from the perspective of the horses being forced to their death.

Table 4 Number of horses requiring more than one captive bolt

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Total Slaughtered	157	116	175	163	140	185	198	162	156	230	1682
Number of horses that needed more than one CB	11	15	4	1	26	4	2	2	-	-	65
%	7.0	12.9	2.3	.6	18.6	2.2	1.0	1.2	-	-	3.9



Horse about to receive a captive bolt at Meramist slaughterhouse

PART 2: THOROUGHBRED IDENTIFICATION

Method

All Thoroughbreds must be microchipped. The number is used to directly identify individual Thoroughbreds through the public web pages of the racing industry. This information includes details about the horse (date of birth, sex, colour), racing history, prize money as well as names of the owners and trainers.

On several occasions over the two year investigation, undercover investigators scanned the microchips of 283 horses that were in the holding pens, awaiting slaughter at one abattoir. It was not possible to scan all of the horses on any day. The microchip numbers were then used to identify the horses and information about them, as presented in the section below. Of the 283 horses scanned, the details of 236 were located on the racing industry web pages and identified as racehorses, while 47 horses were not found.

Results

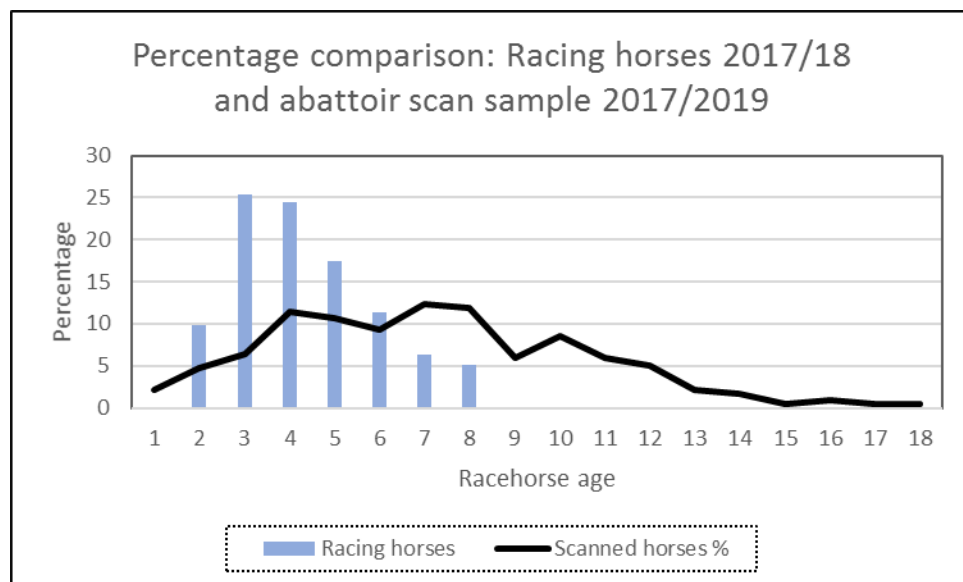
Age of horses

Table 5 shows that over half (55.4%) of the scanned horses were aged between four and eight years. This is consistent with what is known about the age of horses that leave racing (see Figure 1). It is particularly important to highlight that 31 horses (13.2%) at the slaughterhouse were **very** young - three years or younger. Older horses of ten years and over, comprised one quarter (25.4%, n=60). Figure 1 provides a graphic illustration of the percentages, and it also shows a trend in the decline of racing horses from age five to eight years. In summary, three quarters (74.6%, n=176) of the racehorses awaiting slaughter were less than ten years old, with the average age being 7.2 years.

Table 5 Age of scanned Thoroughbreds

Age	Freq	%	Age	Freq	%
1	5	2.1	10	20	8.5
2	11	4.7	11	14	5.9
3	15	6.4	12	12	5.1
4	27	11.4	13	5	2.1
5	25	10.6	14	4	1.7
6	22	9.3	15	1	0.4
7	29	12.3	16	2	0.8
8	28	11.9	17	1	0.4
9	14	5.9	18	1	0.4

Total identified = 236

**Figure 1 Horses slaughtered by age, and the racing population**

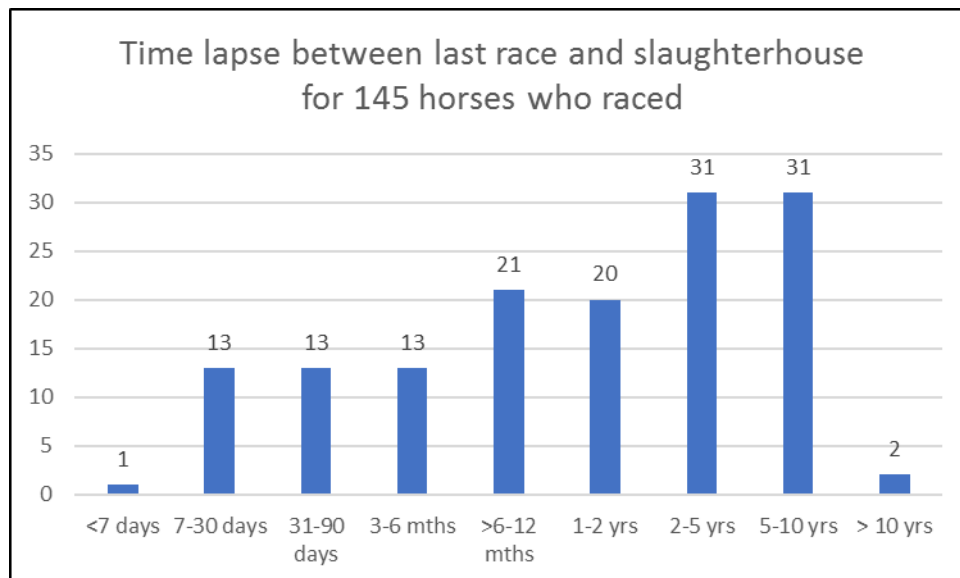
Note: Racing Thoroughbreds over 8 years old are aggregated in industry reports (Racing Australia, Fact Book, 2017/2018)

Lapse time between last race and abattoir

It was possible to identify the lapse time between a horse's last race and the scan date at the abattoir for 145 Thoroughbreds. Of particular note was one horse that was sent to slaughter less than one week after racing, having had no opportunity for rehoming, while a further 26 horses were slaughtered within 90 days of their last race. A total of 40 horses (27.7%) were killed within six months of their last race, while some (n = 31, 21.3%) had been kept for between five and ten years. Two horses had been kept for over ten years.

Table 6 Lapse time between last race and scan date at slaughterhouse

Time	Freq	%
<7 days	1	0.7
7-30 days	13	9.0
31-90 days	13	9.0
3-6 mths	13	9.0
>6-12 mths	21	14.5
1-2 yrs	20	13.8
2-5 yrs	31	21.3
5-10 yrs	31	21.3
> 10 yrs	2	1.4
TOTAL	145	100%

**Figure 2 Lapse time between last race and scan date at the slaughterhouse**

Case studies

Case study: Brief profile of slaughtered Thoroughbreds

Figure 3 shows the details of a small selection of the Thoroughbreds sent to slaughter.

Case Study 1

War Ends was sent to slaughter having earned \$388,388 in 71 races, many times with a tongue tie fitted. War Ends was kept for nearly three years after his last race before being sent to the slaughterhouse. In August 2019 he was still listed on RISA as 'active', four years after his last race and 17 months after being killed.

Case Study 2

Born on the 13 September 2006, **Moonline Dancer** was raced 3 times in 2011. Her connections failed to receive any prizemoney. She was then used as a breeding machine for 7 years over which time she gave birth to 3 foals. Her first, a filly, 'died after birth' according to records. Her second, 'Spanish Steps', was raced to win \$43,595 before being recently 'retired'. Her third filly, Via Condotti, is 5 years old and currently being used to race, with \$58,445 in prizemoney to date. Moonline Dancer also experienced at least 2 miscarriages and was sent to slaughter in December 2017, less than 2 months after being officially 'retired'. At the time of writing, nearly three years on, she is still listed as 'retired' on the Racing Australia website.

Case Study 3

Raced just 5 times, **Bumbunga** earned \$1,765 for his connections before being sent to the slaughterhouse. Being a NSW horse, Bumbunga, who was killed in September 2018, should have been protected from slaughter by NSW LR114. As of October 2020, he is listed on Racing Australia as 'transferred'. He was only 4 years old.

Case Study 4

Not raced until 5 years old, **Time Passes** was used to compete only once in February 2018, coming second last. Just 28 days passed before he was sent to the slaughterhouse and killed.

Figure 3 Case studies of slaughtered horses

Case study: NSW "protected" racehorses found at the slaughterhouse – from the same stud

Racing NSW Local Rule 114 (LR114 Racing NSW, 2017, p.200) places responsibility for the horse upon "a registered owner, trainer or any person", to ensure horses are rehomed and not killed. This case study is an example of how horses can simply disappear without a trace and without any accountability despite rules in place to prevent this from happening.

In September 2018, horses awaiting slaughter at an abattoir in Caboolture were inspected. From the data obtained from microchip scans, video and photographic evidence, 14 horses were found to have come from the same stud. Three of the horses were broodmares, of which two were 10 years of age. Of the remaining horses, one was an unraced 4-year-old, one an unraced 3-year-old, two were unraced 2-year-olds, and one was unable to be identified. The six remaining horses were just one year of age. It was also able to be determined that at least two of the three broodmares were the mothers of some of these young horses and were each sent into the knock box just ahead of their own foals. None of the horses appeared to have any injuries or any reason for being sent to slaughter. From the video evidence provided, they appear in relatively good condition and used to human contact.



Two-year-old Thoroughbreds in the slaughterhouse holding pens

The horses were born at a stud in NSW and having never raced, it is assumed that the horses also lived at the same stud and were brought to the abattoir together. Under NSW Racing local rule 114, horses that are domiciled in NSW are not permitted to be sent to slaughter and should be re-homed. This is a clear breach of the rule and demonstrates its ineffectiveness.

In a clear breach of LR114, these 14 horses were killed almost a year after the introduction of the rule.

In addition to the horses from this particular stud, many other horses that were scanned during the investigation were either born in NSW, and/or raced in NSW.

Of the entire list of 194 **named** horses scanned by investigators at the slaughterhouse - 43 were predominantly raced in NSW and 2 were equally raced in NSW and another state. Of those 45 total - 14 were either raced after October 1 2017 (when LR114 came into place) and/or were listed on the Racing NSW list of NSW horses retired after Oct 1 2017.

Status on Racing Australia's website

As of August 2019, many months after their deaths, the scanned horses' status was checked on Racing Australia's website. Of the **194 named** horses scanned by investigators:

- 112 were listed as **retired** by Racing Australia;
- 44 were listed as **active**;
- 28 were listed as **transferred**;
- 3 were listed as **spelling**
- 2 were listed as **pending**; and
- Only 5 were listed as **deceased**.

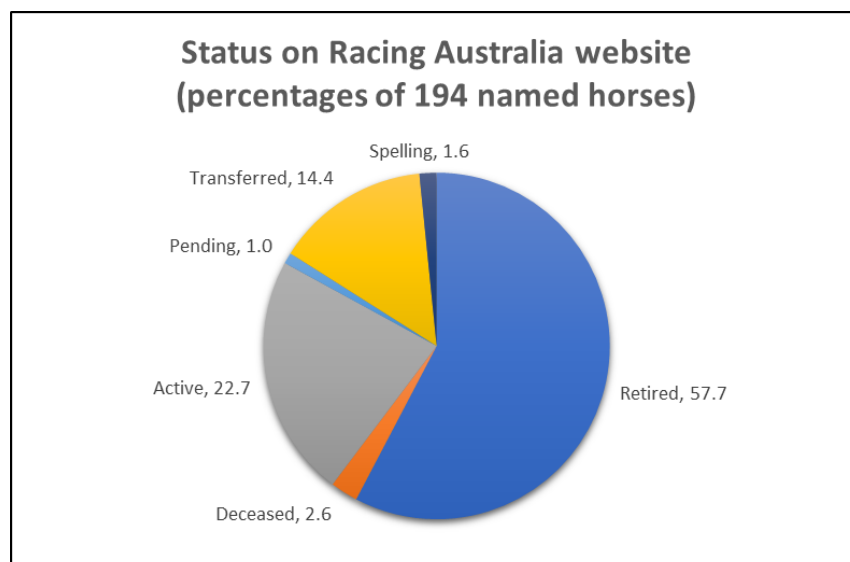


Figure 4 Status of scanned horses on Racing Australia's website

These results are coming five years after Racing Australia made retirement forms compulsory.

Although local rule 114 may have been well intentioned, the lack of proper policing of the rule and insufficient penalties to deter owners and trainers from sending horses to slaughter, has no doubt failed to protect not only those identified but also many other NSW racehorses from being sent to slaughter.

Limitations of the study

Estimates of the numbers of racehorses slaughtered was based upon the best efforts of CPR using the available video evidence provided by undercover investigators. CPR acknowledges that branding of horses is not exclusive to Thoroughbreds (i.e stock horses can also be branded) however these horses are relatively small in number compared to Thoroughbreds and are also different in appearance. They are also less likely to be sent to slaughter due to their higher commercial value.

It is however much more likely that many horses were not identified as racehorses due to the brands not being in view or not visible from the video footage obtained. It is important to note that brands on racehorses both on Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds, are sometimes difficult to discern even in full daylight at close range. It is our view that it is much more likely that the results present an underestimate of racehorse slaughter.

This study considered one of two abattoirs in Australia that kill horses for human consumption and did not include any of the approximately 30 knackerries. The estimated numbers in this study therefore represent only a part of the overall racehorse slaughter.

Implications

The existence of Thoroughbred racing, along with other animal-using industries, depends upon a social licence - support from the public for its activities. The use of animals in the racing industry now sits within a much broader and substantially changing social

environment where cruelty and inappropriate treatment of animals is being exposed and critiqued. Recent studies in Australia show that many people do not agree with the use of animals for entertainment, particularly when they perceive that use involves cruelty or has detrimental effects on animal welfare (McManus & Graham, 2014). As Thomson et al. (2014) note, there is already a perception among the public that most horses leaving racing are sent to slaughter. The racing industry is also facing competition from many other forms of entertainment, and it no longer enjoys the loyalty it once had, especially from younger generations (McManus & Graham, 2014).

The racing industry has responded to public critique about the treatment of racehorses with claims that their horses are loved and well cared for. This is simply inadequate, and the evidence presented here presents a substantial challenge to these claims. The fact that any number of healthy racehorses are sent to be slaughtered is an indictment on the racing industry which has bred, trained and used these animals for what can only be called frivolous use - entertainment and gambling. The industry has steadfastly refused suggestions from the Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses (2013) that an *adequate* level of funding be set aside for a comprehensive retirement plan for retired racehorses.

The industry has also sought to assure the public that the welfare of racing animals is being addressed through the introduction of new rules and regulations. Once again, this report provides evidence that suggests these measures are unreliable at best, and possibly just PR spin designed to appease the general public who are becoming increasingly aware of cruelty in horse racing.

In response to the public outrage of the treatment of retired racehorses, Racing NSW has purchased four properties for the purpose of rehabilitating and re-homing ex-racehorses which is acknowledged as a step in the right direction, however much more needs to be done to re-home and care for all the horses exiting racing. In Victoria, leading trainer Peter Moody has suggested having an industry run knackery to deal with the surplus of ex-racehorses (Tzaferis, 2019). Racing Victoria has also suggested financing on-site euthanasia as a solution (ABC News, 2019). While Racing NSW has implemented rules to protect every racehorse from being prematurely killed, the rules are not being adequately policed.

Recommendations

National Horse Traceability Register

Currently, it is simply too easy to purchase a horse and have them disposed of when no longer wanted or as is the case with racehorses, no longer profitable. The many thousands of healthy horses killed every year around Australia has identified a need for a register (CPR's submission [Addendum 1](#)) that would make every horse traceable and every owner accountable. A register that would allow any horse and their owner to be identified at any time would not only provide valuable and accurate data about horses but serve as a deterrent to over-breeding and to owners not properly caring for their horses.

In 2019, Senator Mehreen Faruqi from The Greens put forward a proposal for a National Horse Traceability Register. A Senate Select Committee was formed and submissions were called for. The register was widely supported, including by the racing industry, and the committee determined that such a register should be created. We now wait for a working group to be formed to make the National Horse Traceability Register a reality.

Rehabilitation and retirement plan for racehorses

In 2013 CPR submitted a proposal ([Addendum 2](#)) to the racing industry that would utilise a small percentage of gambling revenue to care for all the Thoroughbred racehorses born into the racing industry. The industry profits from the Thoroughbred horse and therefore has a moral obligation to look after them before, during and after their time being used for racing.

Take the CPR pledge to never attend or bet on a horse race

CPR has a user-friendly pledge you can take that immediately informs key industry and government officials that you refuse to support horse slaughter and have therefore committed to never attend or bet on a horse race again. Your pledge will send a clear message that killing horses simply because they are no longer wanted or profitable is unacceptable. Take the pledge at horseracingkills.com

Conclusion

Data from this study has provided an estimation of the number of racehorses (TB and SB) slaughtered for human consumption at one slaughterhouse in Australia. A total of 1,682 horses were observed being slaughtered over ten days: 776 were confirmed Thoroughbreds and 176 were confirmed Standardbreds. In a slaughterhouse that kills one day per week, this figure extrapolates to an annual slaughter of 4,940 racehorses (4056 Thoroughbreds and 884 Standardbreds). CPR's estimate of an annual slaughter of 4,940 confirmed racehorses at one plant, is higher than, but consistent with Doughty et al.'s (2009) data that indicated a figure of 3,050. The former CEO of Racing Australia (Racing Australia, 2016a) stated that 0.4 percent of retired Thoroughbred horses are sent to slaughterhouses – which would amount to just 48 out of the approximately 12,000 retired Thoroughbred horses. That number is exceeded in just one week at this one slaughterhouse alone. With a second abattoir in South Australia that also kills horses and approximately 30 knackeries, CPR estimates that approximately 10,000 racehorses are killed in Australia every year.

This report presents a radically different picture of racing to that promoted by the industry. Racing industry owners, trainers and other supporters are often reported in the media as saying that they love their horses and assuring the public that the animals are well cared for and are ultimately retired and rehomed. This report by CPR depicts an industry that is prepared to discard healthy, young animals, just to be rid of them. The slaughter of TB and SB horses appears to be a systematic process which is hidden as much as possible from public view.

While racing and its associated industries may continue to claim a need for “commercial in confidence” regarding the slaughter of racehorses, their equally important need for a valid social licence may counter the practice of these operations being continued in secret. The Information Commissioner of NSW deemed that horse racing is accountable to the public (Eddie, 2008). The racing industry is thus placed in a very difficult position, where denial and secrecy, as well as openness about the slaughter of racehorses, is likely to cause its reputation great harm.

The indiscriminate treatment of unwanted racehorses as described in this study, highlights the failure of the racing industry to provide the required care that the general public expects. Disposing of racehorses because they no longer serve their intended purpose, is unacceptable.

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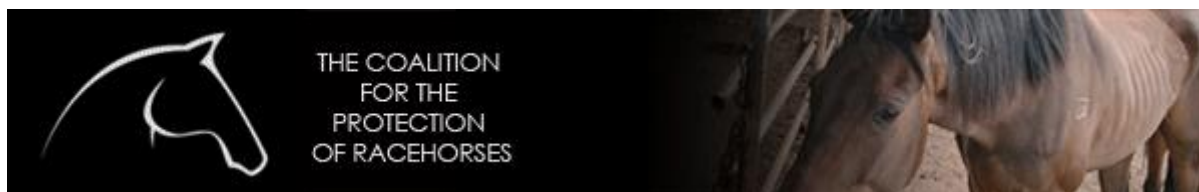
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