



THE COALITION FOR THE PROTECTION OF RACEHORSES Inc.

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Clerk of the Committee
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2020 Petition to cancel the \$72.5m bailout of the New Zealand horse racing industry

Tēnā koe Mary Drakeford

The Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses reflects public concerns about the welfare and treatment of racehorses

The Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses (CPR) was formed in Australia in 2008 to address the serious animal concerns prevalent in the racehorse industry. The public in Australia and New Zealand are becoming increasingly troubled by the use of horses for entertainment, including in horse racing, as increased media attention is telling us¹.

CPR collaborates with international animal welfare and animal rights organisations in Europe and the USA. We represent the three satellite teams in New Zealand working to achieve, at a minimum, improvements in the lives of racehorses. We are concerned, however, that the Government is propping up a sunset industry that profits from animal cruelty and off the backs of New Zealanders and communities who gamble away money they cannot afford.

Taxpayers should not be bailing out an industry that is dying and that is also exploiting and harming animals and communities

Our petition, signed by over 12,500 people, asks the Government to review its Budget 2020 \$72.5m bailout of the racing industry and to instead invest tax-payers money in sustainable, innovative and cruelty-free industries. We are concerned that:

- racehorses, as sentient beings, are subject to unacceptable treatment to ensure profit
- horse racing will always rely on state bailouts as it is a dying industry
- the desire to increase the prize pool serves only to encourage more gambling
- gambling causes substantial harm to New Zealand communities and the most vulnerable²

¹[Newshub - Wellington Cup targeted by animal rights activists.](#)
[RNZ - horse racing protection group wants jumps racing banned](#)
[Newshub - auckland protesters will highlight the hidden cruelty of melbourne cup races](#)
[Spinoff - the dark side of horse-racing](#)
[SPINOFF - three deaths in four days its time to end the cruelty of horse racing](#)
[STUFF - horse racing the sport of kings or dead cert gambling driven animal cruelty](#)
[teaomaori news – animal rights advocates want horse racing banned](#)
[STUFF - Horse, Dog Racing and pokie machines must be scrapped](#)

² [Measuring the Burden of Gambling Harm in New Zealand | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

We appreciate the Budget process and balancing of coalition government expectations, but note this Government has pledged to continue the trajectory of the former government to reinvigorate racing. However, if the Government continues down this rabbit hole, it will be difficult to get out of. We understand, for example, that the \$26m gifted to the industry is to pay off outstanding supplier bill, in short debt but that the Racing Industry Transition Agency (RITA) reportedly has further debts of \$45m³. The \$72.5m bailout was made while St John's Ambulance struggles to deliver an essential service⁴ and GPs were denied support while horse racing tracks were bankrolled by the Provincial Growth Fund despite not meeting the criteria.⁵

The racing of thoroughbreds has significant animal welfare issues as horses are suffering and dying in racing every year:

- 90 percent of horses have blood in their lungs after suffering from severe exercise induced pulmonary haemorrhage⁶
- horses die on New Zealand racetracks every year due to severe exercise induced injuries; the industry reported the deaths of 19 horses in 2019 and 12 horse deaths in 2020
- horses are fed high concentrate diets to ensure super athlete performance, leading to stomach ulcers⁷
- horses kept in confined places like stalls for long periods of time end up with abnormal behaviours and health problems⁸
- the whipping of horses in racing is known to cause pain similar to what humans would feel in the same circumstances⁹
- horses are considered by the industry to be “wastage” when they are no longer profitable with 3,000 considered missing in New Zealand every year.¹⁰

The racing industry's issues are not about poor management but about a loss of social license and growing resistance against the use of animals in entertainment

The Treasury's regulatory impact statement on the racing industry reforms funded by taxpayers, recognises that generational change, the loss of social license and competition from other forms of entertainment, are behind the decline of the racing industry.

However, through efforts to revitalise this industry, the RITA was established in 2019 (as a reconstitution of the NZ Racing Board). That year the Minister of Racing's letter of expectation made some telling points, particularly in the context that the role of the RITA is to maximise profits to the industry.

These points included making decisions in the commercial interest of the industry, delivering high performing animals that attract investment, and making sure as much money as possible goes into the prize money pool. There were two words on animal welfare and they were included to ensure social license.

³ [Winston Peters announces \\$72.5 million emergency package as extent of racing's financial crisis emerges | Stuff.co.nz](#)

⁴ [St Johns' ambulances sitting empty as COVID-19 pandemic leaves \\$30 million deficit | Newshub](#)

⁵ [Christchurch horse racing track bags Provincial Growth Fund cash despite being ruled ineligible | Newshub](#); [How a Christchurch city race track bagged Provincial Growth Fund money - NZ Herald](#)

⁶ [Other Health Issues - Horse Racing Kills](#)

⁷ [Other Health Issues - Horse Racing Kills](#)

⁸ [Confinement - Horse Racing Kills](#)

⁹ [First conclusive evidence horses hurt by whips, whips don't aid jockeys - The University of Sydney](#)

¹⁰ [New Zealand 'Wastage' Estimates - Horse Racing Kills](#)

A desire to shift to a more aggressive commercial model can only mean one thing: that these sentient beings, used as money-makers, will be pushed even further beyond their limits. The entertainment factor and the profit factor require more thrills in the form of pushing horses to go faster and more government prize money, to keep people interested and spending. The maximisation of profits will always bring more misery upon animals who are always the unwilling participants in this 'sport'.

This begs the question to this committee, why is this Government not considering a 'Just Transition' for this industry? We note the deal announced in January for Tiwai Point and the Minister of Finance's comment¹¹ that this was now a time for a managed transition in Southland. We also note an announcement that same month by the Southland regional development agency that New Zealand's first plant-based milk factory will be built in Southland. This is how we will future-proof New Zealand in a changing world.

Racing cannot exist without gambling and gambling cannot exist without the most vulnerable spending what they do not have.

The Ministry of Health commissioned a study by Central Queensland University's Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory and Auckland University of Technology's Gambling and Addictions Research Centre to understand gambling related harm in New Zealand. The study estimates that the total burden of harms occurring to gamblers is greater than common health conditions (such as diabetes and arthritis) and approaches the level of anxiety and oppressive disorders.

The study recognises the strong evidence that certain ethnic groups experience disproportionate harm from gambling and in New Zealand problem gambling is significantly higher for Māori and Pacific populations. When we talk about racing being part of our social fabric, we are saying that gambling is also entrenched. And, by definition, gambling harm. These are not things we think our Government should be nostalgic or positive about.

We are also concerned about the use of whips and other aides that only serve to force horses to literally run for their lives to achieve financial gain for owners and gamblers

Across the globe, our Government is considered to be thoughtful and progressive, but when it comes to animals, it is failing drastically. Here we are in the 21st century, still exploiting horses and forcing them to run at fast speeds. Horses are pushed beyond their limits to the point of sustaining life-threatening injuries, collapse and heart attack, so that they can make money for their owners.

Racehorses are controlled by bits and their tongues are tied causing pain, stress and injury and they are made to run faster by spurs and whips. There is a body of evidence¹² that shows the thinness of a horse's skin makes it vulnerable to pain to the same extent that humans would feel the pain of a whip, and that whipping is not related to racing integrity or safety.

¹¹ [Deal reached: Tiwai to stay open until 2024 | Otago Daily Times Online News \(odt.co.nz\)](https://www.odt.co.nz/news/sport/racing/2024/01/24/deal-reached-tiwai-stay-open-until-2024)

¹² [First conclusive evidence horses hurt by whips, whips don't aid jockeys - The University of Sydney; Animals | Free Full-Text | Is Whip Use Important to Thoroughbred Racing Integrity? What Stewards' Reports Reveal about Fairness to Punters, Jockeys and Horses \(mdpi.com\); Research shows whipping horses doesn't make them run faster, straighter or safer — let's cut it out \(theconversation.com\); Animals | Free Full-Text | A Comparative Neuro-Histological Assessment of Gluteal Skin Thickness and Cutaneous Nociceptor Distribution in Horses and Humans | HTML \(mdpi.com\); 10 reasons to stop whipping racehorses, including new research revealing the likely pain it causes \(theconversation.com\); The science is in: whips hurt horses. | Animals Australia](https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/14/1/10)

Norway banned the use of whips in 1982. The International Federation of Horseracing Authorities' guidelines do not include whips in its Standards of Riding Equipment designed to protect jockeys from avoidable injury.¹³

Horses are sentient beings as recognised under New Zealand law. This means they feel pain and emotions like humans. Unfortunately, we seem to accept there is a level of acceptable harm to horses being raced and to New Zealanders betting on those races.

Rather than financially propping up the racing industry we are asking the Government to end all financial support of horse racing and redirect those funds towards the development of innovative, sustainable and cruelty-free industries.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission and speak up for the horses used and abused by the racing industry.

¹³ [Annex: International Rules and Regulations on Using the Whip - Animal Aid](#)