

Submission to the Australian Veterinary Association

Submitted by: The Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses (CPR)
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Proposal: To update AVA policy titled 'Use of whips on horses at competitive events' to reflect current scientific understanding

A peer-reviewed study released 11 November 2020 (available [here](#)) has revealed that the horse's skin is almost identical in structure as humans and has the same ability to feel pain.

Study: A Comparative Neuro-Histological Assessment of Gluteal Skin Thickness and Cutaneous Nociceptor Distribution in Horses and Humans

Excerpts from the study:

*"The results revealed **no significant difference between humans and horses** in either the concentration of nerve endings in the outerpain-detecting layer of skin (epidermis) or in the thickness of this layer."*

"These findings show that although horse skin is thicker overall than human skin, the part of the skin that is thicker does not insulate them from pain that is generated during a whip strike, and that humans and horses have the equivalent basic anatomic structures to detect pain in the skin."

In another paper, published in October 2020, it was found that whips did not improve steering, reduce interference, increase safety or improve finishing time.

Is Whip Use Important to Thoroughbred Racing Integrity? What Stewards' Reports Reveal about Fairness to Punters, Jockeys and Horses
Available [here](#).

Researchers used data from the UK racing industry to compare 67 races with whips to 59 without, controlled for variables including number of horses, racetrack surface characteristics on the day, and race distance.

Below statement published by the University of Sydney – November 12

"In the UK, unlike in Australia, the racing authorities hold whip-free races for apprentice jockeys," Professor McGreevy explained. "This seems at odds with the racing industry's claim that whips are necessary for steering, and therefore, jockey safety."

"Nevertheless, our analysis of racing stewards' reports from the two types of races revealed no statistical safety difference between races with and without whips."

He and his co-authors also found that race times and metrics of racing integrity – compliance with rules – did not differ between the kinds of races. *"This invalidates industry assumptions to the contrary,"* Professor McGreevy said.

“The findings of this study clearly show that the use of whips in horse racing is unnecessary, unjustifiable and unreasonable.”

We also refer our 2015 proposal to the Australian Racing Board ‘Proposal for Phasing out the Whip in Australian Thoroughbred Racing’ as supporting evidence to this submission – available [here](#).

The current AVA policy on the use of whips in racing states that further research needs to be done to address inconsistencies as to whether whip use aids in horse performance and jockey control.

It also acknowledges that whips act as negative reinforcement and therefore their use should be limited.

Considering the findings of the two forementioned studies and the fact that:

1. whip rule breaches occur in almost every race in Australia, where only a small percentage are picked up and jockeys penalised;
2. Even then, the fines are almost always minimal;
3. Even large fines of tens of thousands of dollars (reserved for the Melbourne Cup) still fail to act as a deterrent, as has been recently proven - article [here](#);
4. the flight response of the horse means the horse reacts to the whip with adrenalin, trying to run beyond their physical capacity, contributing to the prevalence of catastrophic injury, bleeding in the lungs and heart attacks as is documented annually in our Deathwatch Reports – available [here](#).

CPR propose AVA review their current policy and deem the use of whips on horses in racing as unacceptable.

CPR is of the position that so long as horse racing persists, horses should be able to run without fear inducing and pain inflicting implements, allowing them to slow down if they need to. That means ending the use of whips, spurs, tongue ties and cruel bits- all designed to make the horses comply through learned helplessness techniques.



Information

For further information regarding this submission, please contact:

Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses

T: (03) 9016 3277 (3-CPR)

E: enquiries@horseracingkills.com

W: <http://horseracingkills.com>

Postal Address:

PO Box 163

South Melbourne, VIC 3205