



BRIEFING: THE CASE FOR A NEW RACE HORSE WELFARE REGULATOR

CAMPAIGN AIM

TO REMOVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RACE HORSE WELFARE FROM THE BRITISH HORSERACING AUTHORITY AND AWARD IT TO A NEW, INDEPENDENT GOVERNMENT-APPOINTED BODY.

The case against the British Horseracing Authority (BHA)

- The BHA is a racing industry-appointed governing and regulatory organisation. It has autonomous control of race horse welfare with little or no government intervention.
- The BHA actively promotes horse racing in Britain but is also responsible for the welfare of race horses, which causes a conflict of interest.
- Around 200 horses are killed as a result of racing in Britain every year. An undisclosed number die in training for races.
- The BHA does not publish a list of the names of horses who die in racing or in training. Instead, it refers to on-course deaths as a percentage of 'runners' – a misleading statistic which masks the true scale of the problem. For example, if 10 horses run 10 races and one horse dies, the BHA will refer to this as 1 death per 100 runners rather than one horse out of ten.
- The BHA allows the use of the whip on horses for 'correction' and 'encouragement', despite widespread opposition to hitting horses. The word 'encouragement' allows jockeys to beat race horses in an attempt to push them to their physical limits, resulting in hazardous incidents and equine deaths.
- The BHA does not apply any limits on Thoroughbred foal production. This irresponsible approach leads to what the industry calls 'wastage', involving huge numbers of young horses.
- The BHA allows horses to be subjected to the free market economy after they are no longer of use in racing, with an undisclosed number killed at the end of their racing days.
- Race-day governing Stewards frequently fail to accurately report on race horse injuries. And there is no reporting by Stewards on race horse deaths.

The case for an independent race horse welfare regulator

- An independent body of professionals would be accountable to the government and be responsible for scrutinising all aspects of race horse welfare. It would implement measures to help to resolve welfare issues in three key areas: breeding; racing and training; and post-career provision.
- The new body would be responsible for scrutinising individual racecourses and racing conditions, alongside

race calendar programming. It would be able to place requirements on racecourses and the BHA to make tangible changes to lower the rate of injuries and deaths.

- It would publicise the names of all race horses killed on courses and in training. The same would apply to those killed by knacker-men, hunts and abattoirs. Horse deaths by natural causes would also be made known. The list would be published monthly (as is the situation in the Republic of Ireland) and annually.
- The new horse welfare regulator could implement a ban on the use of the whip for anything other than safety. This has been the case in Norway since 1982. British and Irish jockeys adhere to those rules when they ride in Norway.
- The new regulator could impose a cap on the number of Thoroughbreds born in Britain and cap the number of young horses imported from Ireland to be sold and raced in Britain.
- Limits could be placed on excessive stallion covering numbers with greater diversity of bloodlines to minimise line and inbreeding.
- The new regulator could impose a tax on breeders, race horse owners, racecourses and the Racing Authority (using funds from the bookmakers' levy) to provide secure post-career care for all horses connected with the racing industry.
- In due course, the new regulator could demonstrate that sanctions imposed on the racing industry have led to a decline in the rate of injury and deaths, and improved welfare standards for all horses used for racing and breeding currently under the jurisdiction of the BHA.
- The body would have no commercial links to racing, unlike the BHA, its directors, executives and other representatives.
- The new regulator would issue a Welfare Code of Practice for Race Horses.

Evidence

- Around 200 horses are killed due to racing in Britain every year. There has been no decline in the rate of deaths in the last decade. The BHA's figures do not count horses who die or are destroyed after leaving the racecourse with a race-related injury.
- The BHA implemented new whip regulations in 2011. Although there was an initial decline in the number of breaches of the rules, this has now plateaued at around 500 breaches each year. Current sanctions imposed by the BHA do not work and horses continue to suffer as a



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result of being whipped, frequently more times than the BHA's arbitrarily chosen limit of 7 strikes in a Flat race and 8 strikes in a National Hunt (jump) race.

- More horses collapsed and died as a consequence of heat exhaustion in July 2018 than in recent years, yet racing was still permitted to continue. No temperature limits are set where horses would be prevented from racing to minimise potential suffering.
- When a horse's career is over – either from racing or breeding – there is no requirement for race horse owners or breeders to be fully financially responsible for the upkeep of their horses. Donations from owners currently stand at a pittance of £1.25 every time their horse is entered in a race.
- Horses are subjected to racing in dangerous conditions and faced with unsuitable infrastructure. This includes poor racing surfaces, challenging obstacles and welfare issues involving starting stalls.
- Most horses never win a race or cover their annual keep costs and are written off as commercially unviable.
- Breeding operations are unregulated and the physical regimes and mental suffering of horses used for breeding, is an area that has never been acknowledged by the racing industry.
- Another important aspect concerns the gene pool of the Thoroughbred. International Breeding operations have been allowed to dominate the breeding industry – and therefore racing – with their stallions. As all Thoroughbred race horses are bred from a closed gene pool, this further limits what little diversity of bloodlines there are. The long term consequences of this are unknown.
- **As the above evidence shows, there is a pressing need for an independent race horse welfare regulator. There is no viable alternative to establishing a body of this kind.**

How would a new horse welfare regulator be established?

- A DEFRA-appointed working group would be established to set the parameters of the new welfare body, including the selection of members of the new regulator, ensuring that they have equine welfare experience but are not commercially associated with the

racing industry in any way.

- It would establish how often the new regulator would be required to report to the government and set an agenda of work and timetables.
- The working group would establish a budget for the regulatory group, the costs for which would be born by the Racing Authority and funded from their distribution of the betting levy.

Support for the new Race Horse Welfare Regulator

- 105,000+ British citizens and UK residents signed a government e-petition supporting the creation of a new independent horse welfare regulator.
- At the 2018 Liberal Democrats conference, a motion was passed calling on the government to 'Establish an independent regulatory body for horse welfare, which is separate from the British Horseracing Authority, to prevent abuse of racehorses and reduce avoidable deaths.'
- A 2018 YouGov Poll on the Use of the Whip in Racing¹ showed that:
 - 68% of respondents either oppose (30%) or strongly oppose (38%) the Use of the Whip in Racing
- A follow up poll in September 2018², found that:
 - After being told about the number of horses who are killed each year due to horse racing, 63% of respondents support the creation of a new, independent organisation to be responsible for race horse welfare.
 - 63% of respondents support the idea of making it a requirement for the names of all race horses who die during racing each month in Britain to be reported publicly, rather than the current system of expressing deaths as a total number or percentage of times that horses have raced.
 - 74% of respondents would support the idea of race horse owners and breeders being required to pay an initial sum of money and a monthly levy fee during the race horse's career, which would then be used to fund their future care after racing.

Full references available on request.

¹ The YouGov poll sample size was 2106 GB adults, with the fieldwork undertaken between 29th March -2nd April 2018. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). Respondents were asked for their reaction to the following statement: 'The racing industry says that whips are used on horses for safety and encouragement. Those against the use of whips on horses say they cause pain to horses and are used most often in the final stages of a race to bully horses to run to their physical limit. To what extent do you support or oppose the use of the whip in horse racing?' Total opposition was 68%. Of those who expressed a view, this figure rose to 83%.

² All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2002 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 12th - 13th September 2018. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

For more information, visit www.animalaid.org.uk



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