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Welfare Standards

Maintaining an above reasonable standard of welfare for the thoroughbred should be upheld from birth until death. A Thoroughbred bred for racing has been given meticulous care and management during its yearling preparation, carried through to its breaking in and then onto its racing campaign. It is therefore not acceptable when the level of care for them starts to spiral downwards when their purpose for racing is not realised.

They are animals who have been accustomed to wearing head-collars and being led by a human, be separated from a horse of different gender (prior to gelding) , given meals and veterinary treatment if sick or injured and also have regular farrier work. They are also familiar to transport conditions whereby they are separated from other horses by way of partitions.

These basic elementary needs for the animal have to be the foremost concern for welfare standards and carried out throughout the entirety of its life.

Implementing a tracking system whereby once a year a thoroughbred (whether it has been retired from racing or not) should be visited by an animal welfare officer and authorise its status. If they deem that the animal's "quality of life" is poor ie welfare standards are not met, then they can sanction that the horse be transported to a rehoming or rehoming program or advise for the horse to be humanely euthanized.

Commercial Slaughter of Horses

We agree that there is a place to have knackeries or the commercial slaughter of these horses. With the numbers bred each year across all codes of Equestrian sport (not just horse racing) it is not possible to have each horse disposed of (at a tip) or cremated following euthanasia or live bolt - they have to exist.

Ideally if euthanizing or the disposing of the body was dramatically subsidised, numbers in knackeries would drop. Most horse owners choose to send their beloved pet, or old competition horse, or infertile broodmare etc to the knackery as it is cost effective and easy to do, or because there are no other options provided to them, nor assistance to help them do otherwise.

The bottom line: Having the knackeries regulated is a must. Ensuring horses are penned with adequate water and food, shade and are rugged during the colder months is paramount. Reduce holding days to a maximum of 3. Especially if these horses are used for human consumption – is there not a standard that the animal is 'stress free' – does this not affect the quality of the meat as it does with the cattle? Horses are extremely emotive animals who pick up inherently on fear – they



are flight animals. The conditions at knackeries should be a place whereby they are not aware of the slaughter of another horse. This is cruelty in itself if this is the case.

Racehorses an Exception at Knackeries

Due to how profitable the Racing Industry is, they should carry a higher level of obligation than any other horse industry to ensure that the race-horses find long and lasting homes and where possible DO NOT end up in knackeries.

Equestrian Australia and other horse bodies do not have the same financial power to employ Animal welfare personnel. The racing industry DO have the financial power to create other options for the horses in retirement. We do believe there should be synergy across all the Equestrian bodies by way of a tracking system/register.

So much money and planning is poured into the Thoroughbreds life prior to it coming into the world with no certainty of its success on the race-track.

What is considered an “old” retiring age – ie 8 years old, is actually very young when considering that a thoroughbred’s life expectancy is 25 years old. The racing industry is currently providing support and management of the animal for only just over 30% of its life. This needs to be extended – especially for the public eye who place the most scrutiny on the industry.

Knackeries should be the absolute end of the line option for the thoroughbred that is bred for racing. Only until all options are exhausted for their rehoming, re-education and rehabilitation, should a retired race-horse be then euthanized.

If retired race-horses are given the opportunity to be given a new set of skills, then are assessed to what home it is most suited for and more emphasis is placed on the “match making” between it and its new owner, the number of discarded horses will be reduced.

Perhaps there should be knackeries owned by Racing Australia or State Racing Industries – therefore only slaughter the thoroughbreds that ‘slip through the system’ and that way would have quality control on horses as they come through the gates. Racing personnel scan the horses’ microchip to then ascertain if the thoroughbred should be there.



Inadequacies in the Regulatory arrangements for managing welfare of retired race-horses

The majority of trainers do not have the resources or support to rehome these horses. At our stable we have an Animal Welfare and Rehoming manager (Jane Gollan) who has extensive knowledge (on the processes required to rehome and experience in doing so. The priority is to ensure horses are going into the “right” homes following retirement. This type of role should be created in each racing stable.

If the stable is unable to facilitate or afford this, a trainer must contact QRIC and support is then offered by THEIR Animal welfare officers.

Recently, a trainer thought they were doing the right thing by way of entrusting the pre-trainer to rehome their sound gelding who earned 240k during its career. Owners were in trust of trainer in doing this. The pre-trainer believed they were doing the right thing by rehoming the gelding to a young girl who claimed they were from a competition home and would care and provide for this horse.

As it turned out this gelding was sent straight to the sales and was sold for a mere \$450 – a bidder out bid the “doggers”

Why was this horse not given ample time to let down – say 4-6 weeks prior to being rehomed?

There was no due diligence from either Trainer, Pre-trainer or Owner(s) to where the horse would be going in retirement.

Thorough screening should be a protocol of rehoming a horse from the trainer to new owner.

In our stable, many questions are asked of those expressing interest in taking the retired horse. We would also expect to be asked many questions in return if a person is looking to find the right horse for them. It may take some months until a horse is rehomed from Gollan Racing at the cost of either the Trainer or the owners. We make it our job to ensure that all boxes are ticked and we have full confidence that the horse is going to a right home.

We have had issues in tracking down horses following retirement. Most recently we have been unable to obtain the information from the person we rehomed a horse to a few years ago. After several attempts, even in conversation, this person is refraining from providing the information on the horse. So is there any authority for QRIC to step in on our behalf to assist in this instance?



Rehoming Program Recommendation

Jane has done considerable work and will soon be launching a non for profit Foundation for the Re-training and Rehoming (with tracking) of Thoroughbreds. A meeting could be made to discuss with her further. The Foundation includes:

- Professional Re-trainers/Re-educators who have had extensive experience re-training the thoroughbred from racing; are competitors at a very high level in the sports of Dressage, Show-jumping and Eventing. They are also accredited Coaches with Equestrian Australia.
- A 12 week re-training program
- Adoption Process - a legal contract between adopter and foundation. There is a duty to report annually back to foundation with updates on their horse's welfare and progress.
- Horsemanship skills and training and therapy provided to those suffering from trauma or PTSD
- Educational seminars held at the Re-trainers properties or equestrian centres
- Ongoing education and training for the Adopters and graduates of the program
- Board of Directors – all women who are passionate about the Rehoming of Retired Racehorses and are also involved in the Racing industry in some way

Jane anticipates that the funding will be received via:

- Race-horse Owner contribution
- Donations via website
- Proceeds of Horses that are adopted
- Membership fees
- Fundraising events.

(To date, money spent for the set -up of the Charity has been at Janes' expense)

At an industry level, we believe Funding should be received via:

- % on purchase price on yearlings at ALL horse sales – whether Yearling, Ready to Run, Broodmares
- % of Prize-money
- % of membership from the Metropolitan Race clubs – ie Brisbane Racing Club

We believe the owners should not be penalised any further especially when they already get hits to prize-money. However we currently encourage our owners to support the rehoming process by way of covering spelling costs until the horse is rehomed and we advise them of this process when they purchase into a yearling via an Information package sent to new owners of the stable.

So often the time it gets lumped back on the trainer, as a horse is unable to be rehomed and owners do wipe their hands of any obligation. This is when the industry needs to provide support.

We think it should be a mandatory requirement that owners cover spelling costs following racing retirement until a home for them is found.



Horse Traceability Register

This would have a significant positive impact not only on our stable, but Racing and other horse industries. A national register that covers ALL horses and their sports – ie Equestrian Australia, National Pleasure Association etc should be implemented.

We have had discussions that it would be prudent if there was software that could have all owners listed in the duration of a horse's life.

Even when a race-horse has a transfer of ownership – the old owners sit idle in the system and then the current owners sit on top. This also needs to be the case even when a horse moves from retired status into the equestrian world or into another horse industry– owners continue to get updated on the register.

If a horse has a name change for competition purpose in the Equestrian world and one tries to find the horse via its original name, the software should have the capability of bringing the details of this horse up.

We have such power of the microchip. What if each current owner of every horse (no matter what discipline) was to complete a simple registration renewal form each year, noting information such as horse location, owner details, current activity status of horse – ie pleasure, breeding, competition or deceased (reason) and have the information signed off by an authorised Vet who works for the national register. If this renewal form is not complete and sent back within a due date – fines are imposed. Alternatively if this process is not undertaken and the status of the horse remains “incomplete” Animal welfare officers have authority to investigate further.

This income generated on this “Registration Renewal Form” could go back into the Welfare fund of the thoroughbreds or horses in general.

Finally, a horse should be given the final opportunity to be rescued prior to entering a knackery.

There will be many that “slip through the system” so if horses are microchipped prior to entry and this information is then fed back to the Register and ALL owners – current and past are notified of its location status as in the knackery, there may be an opportunity for one of those owners to take the horse back.