

Inquiry into Animal Cruelty in the Management of Retired Racehorses in Queensland



Submission by
Lakeside Animal Sanctuary Incorporated - LASI

FOREWORD:

Firstly, thank you for your invitation to submit our first hand experience and account, our perspective and position based on our combined 43 years from one of our vet's Kevin Squire's experience specialising in the racehorse on track care, 70 + years from our board members as well as our last 5 + years of involvement within the race horse industry as a sanctuary and after race life care, (witnessing the exceptional, the good, the bad and the utterly ugly) towards your enquiry.

We acknowledge that this will not be an overnight resolution, however are hopeful that the implementation of such standards will be put into action to ensure the longevity and quality of life as well as accountability actioned in respect to the following enquiry.

We do have a few additional points that we feel should be addressed and included, which should sum up our submission and perspectives with regards to our answers and the first hand accounts of each matter addressed.

These points can be found at the end of our submission titled "End Note".

Question 1: Should welfare standards for retired racehorses be defined in terms of quality of life or length of life, or both?

Answer: As a sanctuary, our position is this, BOTH; welfare standards MUST BE maintained until a reputable vet gives the ok that the quality of life has deteriorated to such an extent that euthanasia is then the only option regardless of the horse's age.

As a sanctuary we engage the scholarly advice of several separate vets to conclude the best course of action for the individual horse in question.

Our own policy is, if the horse in every other aspect, aside from its adversity, shows a willingness to want to live and an interest in life, we will do our very best to provide the top quality care necessary to attempt to pull that horse back to full health, regardless of age and regardless of the extent of the injuries we have had surrendered into our care.

We can only refer back to this statement: "if this was your mother, father, daughter, son or best friend (which as a horse, most horse owners see their horse as their best friend), would you not try all you could to save, pamper, make comfortable, and ensure the best quality care was provided up until the final moment of releasing the pain or suffering and respecting the horse that has provided you with such unimaginable benefits, would you not return the favour. And then at that final moment pay your last respects by a 'on the property' euthanasia, so as to not distress your pride and joy with unimaginable fear by sending and disregarding your horse to a knackery for the horse's final moments."

Providing adequate care and feed is essential for any and all horse owners.

Seeking help when you recognise you are unable to provide this level of care is also essential.

To summarise the answer to this question:

Should welfare standards for retired racehorses be defined in terms of quality of life or length of life, or both; they go hand in hand and the welfare should be maintained for the entire duration of the horse's life with absolute adequate quality of life care and if required, help should be sought to ensure this is put into action.

A suggestion is to establish a help line or web page for horse owners finding themselves in just such a position, to direct them to where they can seek help and assistance, advice on how to

maintain condition, wellbeing and good quality husbandry should be readily available to everyone, regardless of retired or not.

This is in particular a sensitive subject due to the enormity of the drought. Lack of water equates to lack of feed, equates to lack of ability to care for valued friends we refer to as horses.

Question 2: [Is there still an argument for the commercial slaughter of horses, if performed appropriately and humanely?](#)

Answer: This is a rather complicated question.

Firstly, there is no such thing as a humane slaughter. If a horse/livestock has a will to live, that horse/livestock then has a right to live, and can't possibly be seen as "humane" to take that breath away from that horse/livestock, particularly in a slaughter environment. The smell of blood, the heightened fear and anxiety built up with adrenaline and exacerbated by humans that have had to build up a resistance of 'not to care' in order to repeatedly kill and take one life after another.

The energy of this environment is by nature aggression by humans needed to maintain their own sanity to justify their killings.

The want to set into flight mode and escape for the horses/livestock would be terrifying.

These are not easily addressed subjects. However here is our attempt:

We do not believe there is a commercial argument for the slaughter of horses, regardless of how 'appropriate and humane' they are labelled.

Now here is why: until the people breeding indiscriminately are held accountable for their "wastage" production, this should not fall back on the life they have purposefully bred into this world to live a life, that those lives may not fully be all they had hoped for or wished to profit from and are not currently seeking other avenues to retrain or re-educate these very potential horses.

Some of these so referred to as 'wastage' horses showed exceptional potential at jumping. An example witnessed was, as a knackery truck pulled up to load 30+ horses, several jumped a 6 ft fence at a stand still and galloped away. Those types of skills would be more than welcome in the jumping industry,

however still after much chasing and effort ended up on the knackery truck as they had failed their 2 year old trials on track.

This is not the fault of the horses in question.

If this position is not accepted or considered, then here are our recommendations and suggestions that should be implemented as legislation:

SLAUGHTER HOUSES/KNACKERY IMPROVEMENTS:

1. Microchip scanned and horse identified. All registered (see end note: auction and sales) persons contacted for option to save with a mandatory 4 week withholding period for any of the previous owners to claim at no cost to the previous owner to take that horse back. But the knackery will be responsible for the welfare and care of each horse in the interim. (we see this as a deterrent for knackery purchasers 'doggers' at sale yards to minimise the 'wastage')
2. Cameras to be installed with 24 hour access by outside authorities such as the DPI, RSPCA, Council, QRIC, RQ etc...
3. The next animal due to be PTS (Put To Sleep), this animal should not witness the killing of the previous animal in front. This should be completely separated from view of all others in line to be killed.
4. A specific legislative architectural set up of separated rooms/areas/quarters be implemented to separate the anxiety and limit the distress prior to the taking of life.
5. On duty vet
6. Swift kill done (immediate kill)
7. Animal cruelty penalised.
8. Policy and conditions reviewed at each facility, if necessary upgraded to meet legislative standards which should be implemented.

Question 3: [Should racehorses be an exception?](#)

Answer: In short yes. If you choose to breed a horse then you should be responsible for that horse until the day a reputable vet gives you the authority for that horse to be put to sleep, on your own property.

If when you breed a horse you are made accountable for the entirety of that life (the entire projected 35+ years life expectancy), then over breeding will be limited and the current enquiry will be satisfied as per the future results. Over time all

these questions asked by every enquiry will become moot, as these extensive issues should all be addressed and set up to provide for future generations and the longevity of a successful racehorse career or at the alternative a variety of equally successful options of disciplines to live a full and happy life.

Question 4: Are you aware of any gaps or inadequacies in the regulatory arrangements for managing the welfare of retired racehorses?

Answer: In our experience there is a massive gap and definite inadequacies in regulatory arrangements for managing the welfare of racehorses.

For an example; once an actively registered racing mare changes category towards a 'broodmare' status, she is then no longer considered 'actively registered' and is therefore seen to no longer be under the QR jurisdiction of concern (so we were informed). By the same token they are not under the jurisdiction of the RSPCA either, as the RSPCA advises they have no jurisdiction to inspect anything remotely racehorse related. As a result thousands of cases go unanswered for, suffering excruciating deaths with little to no care by breeders seeking the numbers rather than the educated paired match pedigree breed horse.

GENERAL INDUSTRY IMPROVEMENTS RELATING TO WELFARE:

1. Regulate equine dental vet practise (a large majority of horses that have come into our care act out due to pain, suffering from inadequate dental maintenance and attention done by insufficient dental technicians or have had 'back yard' attempts at doing teeth that have no business touching such a vital and delicate nerve system that has such significant implications of future problems.
2. Coordinate with other authorities. At the moment once a race horse has left racing and is either a brood mare or retired, for example the RSPCA don't have jurisdiction over cruelty complaints, neither do the RIC so these horses are left without a governing authority and significantly result in many horses left to suffer. If these authorities would combine their powers and regulations, there would be a considerable improvement in overall welfare standards within the racing industry during and after race life care. This should be implemented as a nation wide regulation; we believe this would greatly benefit the racing industry.
3. Increase stock squad staff. Currently there is only 2 stock squad staff per multiple council jurisdictions. This therefore leaves a

large number of cases unattended, resulting in a magnitude of complaints slipping through the cracks. As an example, whilst 2 truck loads of horses travelling from Victoria to a QLD abattoir, as well as several separate cattle theft cases were in progress, the only 2 stock squad agents for the enormous area were diverted to attend a vegan activist protest to keep the peace. Unfortunately all other stock related matters then went sadly unanswered. With a definite increase in stock squad staff we would see this as a massive benefit, also providing additional employment opportunities.

4. Regular drop by checks of facilities horses are kept at for all their life
5. If anyone is remotely involved, related or associated with the investigated individuals, then they should not be allowed to attend such jobs due to conflict of interest.
6. All race horse industry standards, rules and regulations should be implemented nation wide to eliminate horses travelling on trucks from one end of Australia to the other.

Question 5: [Are you aware of any gaps or inadequacies in the regulatory arrangements, including the transport standards, for managing the welfare of horses in the meat processing industry?](#)

Answer: we are aware of significant gaps and inadequacies in the regulatory arrangements, which do include transportation standards for the welfare of horses and livestock, however find these standards need addressing regardless of the fact that these lives are about to be ended. We again refer back to "if this was your family how would you want them to spend their last breaths of life".

The most inadequate gap would be for horses sold at all levels of auctions days prior to birthing and in some cases prematurely giving birth as a consequence of travelling 10+ hours straight without water or food and not offered water or food once stopped due to trucking driving laws. These horses are then left for an additional 10 hours parked at a truck bay most often waiting for a further however long to reach their final destination.

Suggested improvements:

Set up at every 4 - 5 hours on main trucking roads/routes an offloading facility with adequate segregated spaces, shade, water and feed provided readily available.

We recommend that a pregnant horse should not be allowed to travel or be sold 3 months prior to birthing

If a confirmed pregnancy has been conducted, in these cases, standards of sale should be prohibited for a period of 3 months prior to birthing, this should be legislation.

This then brings us to legislating the breeding and registration of paired breeding. If breeding is more governed then 'wastage' is kept to a minimum and would instead raise funds towards the standard of afterlife care.

Question 6: If the inquiry were to recommend a rehoming program for retired racehorses in Queensland, what elements should it possess to deliver greatest benefit, and how should it be funded?

Answer: regarding rehoming program for retired racehorses:

1. Long term secured lifetime care pending age and/or a life time lease option if still within assessed fitness to be retrained. Either way a lifetime security option of care should be fulfilled.
2. Recognised by governing officials to be of a reputable standard and able to be appropriately governed over a long-term period and not an overnight popup that wishes to make a quick buck.
3. Proven results of caretaking
4. Proven dedication to the welfare of the horses and not for the profit

How this should be funded:

1. Winnings proceed levy 2.5%
2. Breeding program fee towards retirements (see end note: Breeding)
3. Compulsory surrender fee eg. \$1500
4. Conception fee (once a confirmed pregnancy by a vet, a vet should upload this information, so that at foaling a fee can be implemented)

AFTER-RACE CARE:

1. Compulsory surrender fee min \$1500 (this covers a vet check and call out fee to establish where horse is at, any soundness issues needing attention (eg. Teeth requiring a equine veterinary dental expert) and verify details have been kept up to date and are met)
2. Compulsory tracking (when an agent or authority drops by, every horse should be readily up to date with all its information and able to be appropriately identified)
3. Reputable retraining assessment

4. Straight to a reputable spell property/sanctuary/registered after race care facility.
5. Enforce an application to become endorsed as a reputable training/caring/after-race care facility by racing officials and government.
6. Document and list reputable re-trainers/sanctuary's/after-race care facilities on government web page.
7. Potential riders assessed for experience of suitability to ride an OTT (Off The Track). If known to be a beginner, pass a short course and assessment to show level of riding skills, for the safety of the rider and future documentation of the horse, as an example, if a rider is not suitable for the level of horse this should not be documented against the horse's abilities, but noted of the riders level of skill.

Question 7: [Are you familiar with the current Federal Senate Committee into the feasibility of a National Horse Traceability Register for all horses? What impact would this have on your organisation?](#)

Answer: Yes we are aware, however we believe this is not feasible and have the following upgraded suggestions be made that are already in place which should be made as a nationally enforced traceability database.

REGISTRATION:

Improve details on existing RBE (registrable bio-security entity number) and correlate microchip to cross reference with details added:

- a. Training history
- b. Diagnosed/prior health issues as they happen
- c. Details of owner, transfer of ownership, category of ownership (breeder, race owner, retired owner, sanctuary, trainer, etc.)
- d. Microchip numbers/registrations (increase information on microchip) to cross reference details on database.
- e. Markings
- f. Vaccination details
- g. Dental checks/maintenance
- h. Guarantee with life brand

END NOTE:

RACING:

1. Enforce a levy on winnings that every win pays a % back to the lifetime care/after race care of horses.
2. All of the above improvement be made nationwide to eliminate the concept of a horse then travelling from one end of Australia to the other to escape state laws

BREEDING:

1. License breeding
2. Limit amount of serves to mares by stallions
3. Application to breed/proposed breeding pair
4. Responsible for the entire life of breed horse until independent vet give ok to be PTS (Put To Sleep)
5. Compulsory after race care fee per foal born, sent to a trust until the day horse leaves registration of active racehorse status.

BIRTHING:

1. Mandatory supervision
2. Vet on stand by
3. Adequate birthing facilities and
4. Stand by emergency supplies in place such as colostrum, warm wet towels, and sterilised equipment.
5. Breach birth knowledge
6. "Dummy Foal" first aid procedures
7. Conception fee

AUCTIONS/SALES:

1. Safety bid (ensures no dogger purchase)
2. Auction house must notify authorities of horse that is either branded or registered being logged in to a sale by uploading horse's microchip number and brand to a database.
3. Original owner should/must have the 1st option of purchase and then every owner after that should/must be notified

We sincerely wish our submission has made some constructive observations and valid points, that can be implemented in the future establishment of a better perspective, and show a quality perception displaying the horses' born will to run and dedication of the racing authorities in pursuing best quality standards, by doing so in a joint national effort.