

Thoroughbred Aftercare
Welfare Working Group

ISSUES PAPER AND CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS



Thoroughbred
Welfare
Initiative

Introduction

The thoroughbred horse industry makes a significant contribution to the Australian economy and is part of the fabric of life for many Australians.

The national thoroughbred racing and breeding industry provides 72,000 full-time jobs and delivers over \$9 billion annually in direct and indirect economic benefits.

Most thoroughbred industry participants would argue that the horse and its wellbeing is at the core of their philosophy and love for the racing and breeding industry.

However, serious questions are being asked with regard to the long-term welfare of retired and unraced horses that challenge this perception.

A recent inquiry commissioned by the Queensland Government into “animal cruelty in the management of retired racehorses” concluded “The racing industry in Australia, in general, has fundamentally failed to intervene at industry level to effectively protect retired racehorses”, adding “the industry’s failure appears to be the product of chronic inattentions rather than deliberate disregard”.

Before those findings were handed down, Thoroughbred Breeders Australia (TBA) in conjunction with other national stakeholders, including the Australian Trainers’ Association and Australian Jockeys’ Association, established the Thoroughbred Aftercare Welfare Working Group (TAWWG) to examine and make recommendations to ensure and enhance the welfare outcomes for retired racehorses, unraced horses, and those retired from the breeding industry.

The TAWWG will be consulting widely with industry participants and stakeholders, racing regulators, governments, scientists, animal welfare advocates and interested community members.

The TAWWG is seeking submissions from all interested parties and individuals to assist our considerations and to guide our consultation process.

Set out in this document are the Terms of Reference for our group, as well

as some of the key issues and questions which may help guide your written submission. Details have also been provided on how to make a submission.

We would appreciate comments on any, some or all of the issues, or you may wish to provide comments on other issues you believe are relevant to the welfare and wellbeing of retired and unraced thoroughbred horses.

Dr Denis Napthine

Chair of the Thoroughbred Aftercare Welfare Working Group

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

ISSUE 1

What Is Good Horse Welfare?

Fundamental to the consideration of the welfare of thoroughbred horses is an understanding of how to define, assess or even measure the welfare of a horse.

QUESTIONS

- What are the fundamental principles that must be considered in assessing horse welfare?
- Should there be enforceable standards of care for horses?
- If so, who should set those standards and who should enforce them?
- How does quality of life compare with quantity (length) of life?
- Under what circumstances should euthanasia be allowed?
- Who should be allowed to euthanise a horse and by what methods?
- Should the thoroughbred breeding and racing industry have a social, moral, or even a legal responsibility for the ongoing welfare of thoroughbred horses who have exited the industry?

ISSUE 2

Thoroughbred Breeding

Over the past three years the number of thoroughbred foals produced in Australia has averaged around 13,000. This number has been decreasing over the past 15 years and is now well below the 18,750 foals born in 2005.

During the same time period the number of race meetings, races and average number of runners per race has remained relatively constant, despite the decline in foal production. The number of thoroughbreds sold as yearlings each year has also remained fairly constant, at about 6,000 horses.

However a Melbourne University study* of the 2014 foal crop found that 28% of all foals do not enter training stables by the age of four.

QUESTIONS

- Why do 28% of horses not enter training?
- What is the fate of those that do not enter training?
- What is the ideal size of the foal crop?
- If a smaller foal crop is desirable, how should this be achieved?
- Is there capacity for the industry to alter the number of races, race meetings and handicapping provisions to positively affect welfare?
- Are all thoroughbreds produced with the aim of racing or being sold commercially?

*Dr Meredith Flash (Melbourne University):

Australian thoroughbreds from birth to racing

www.agrifutures.com.au/product/australian-thoroughbreds-from-birth-to-racing/

ISSUE 3

Thoroughbred Traceability

The Australian Senate Rural and Regional Affairs Transport References Committee recently tabled a report entitled “Feasibility of a national horse traceability register for all horses”.

This Committee concluded “Horses are deeply loved by their owners and are highly regarded by the community at large” and they recommended that “the Department of Agriculture establishes a national horse traceability working group ...” and “that the national horse traceability working group work towards establishing a national traceability register that, at its core, serves a biosecurity function”.

Many horse industry stakeholders, including many in the thoroughbred industry, support the concept of a national horse traceability register for all horses.

The thoroughbred industry has its own registration and traceability processes through the Australian Stud Book and Racing Australia. Taken together, these rules are intended to ensure a horse’s location and ownership are known from birth until a horse exits the racing or breeding industries. However, racing regulators have no jurisdiction over horses once they leave the care of industry participants.

QUESTIONS

- How would a national horse traceability register assist in improving welfare outcomes for retired racehorses and thoroughbreds that have never raced?
- Who should pay to establish and maintain a national horse traceability register?
- Who should initiate and manage this register?
- Given that all thoroughbreds are microchipped and registered with the Australian Stud Book, would a national horse register be a duplication?
- Without an operational national horse traceability register how can the thoroughbred industry maintain visibility over horses that leave the racing and breeding industry?
- Are the thoroughbred industry’s traceability measures working effectively?

ISSUE 4

Racing And Breeding Industry – Sponsored Programs For Retired Racehorses

In recent years racing authorities in all states and territories have devoted time, money, effort and leadership to the development and implementation of programs to re-home, care for, and improve welfare outcomes for retired and unraced thoroughbreds.

QUESTIONS

- What programs have been most effective in improving opportunities and welfare outcomes post racing or breeding?
- How can these programs be further improved?
- Is there scope for a national approach for these programs?
- If so, how should this be organised and funded?
- What programs overseas are working effectively to improve outcomes for thoroughbreds exiting the industry?
- What capacity does the equestrian sector in Australia have to take on thoroughbreds? And how can this be increased?

ISSUE 5

Regulation

Across Australia the regulation of animal welfare standards resides within the responsibility of the states and territories under the provisions of various Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Acts or their equivalents.

In addition, there are welfare requirements and provisions under the Australian and State Rules of Racing and the relevant state and territory legislation with respect to thoroughbred racing.

Some jurisdictions also have codes of practice that relate to the treatment and welfare of animals, including horses.

QUESTIONS

- Is the current horse welfare regulatory framework adequate?
- What improvements could be made to the legislation?
- Do we need national animal welfare standards and guidelines for horses?
- Do we need more effective monitoring and enforcement of current horse welfare legislation?

ISSUE 6

Humane Horse Processing Facilities

While regulations vary across Australian states and territories, a number of horses, including some thoroughbreds, are killed and processed for human and animal consumption at abattoirs and knackeries every year.

A recent ABC report highlighted significant mistreatment of horses at one of these facilities, which prompted community concern and led to a Queensland Government inquiry by Terry Martin SC.

QUESTIONS

- If there were adequate and enforceable provisions that ensured horses at processing facilities were treated in a humane and ethical manner, would you consider the processing of horses for pet food and or human consumption acceptable?
- What is the world's best practice for humane operation of horse processing facilities?
- What are the key considerations for the safe and humane euthanasia of a horse?
- Are mobile, on farm, horse processing facilities a feasible option?
- If processing horses at an abattoir or knackery is not acceptable, how should these horses be managed?

ISSUE 7

Research, Development And Education

The thoroughbred industry makes significant investment each year on research and development, through direct expenditure with research institutions, and also through programs such as the AgriFutures administered Thoroughbred Levy.

QUESTIONS

- What research is the highest priority to improve the life-long welfare of thoroughbred horses?
- How should this research be funded?
- What body or groups should be responsible for setting these research priorities?
- How can the thoroughbred industry educate external stakeholders on its welfare initiatives?

How To Make A Submission

We are seeking submissions from all interested parties, whether they be an individual, an organisation, private company or government.

The TAWWG may wish to quote from extracts of submissions, with appropriate attribution, unless those making submissions request they remain confidential.

Submissions can be

emailed to

secretariat@thoroughbredwelfareinitiative.org.au

or posted to

TAWWG, PO Box 149, Canterbury, NSW 2193.

The deadline for submissions is midday July 24, 2020.

For further information on this process, you can contact the Secretariat for the TAWWG at secretariat@thoroughbredwelfareinitiative.org.au, phone (02) 9930 4043 or go to thoroughbredwelfareinitiative.org.au.

As well as taking written submissions, the TAWWG will also be holding meetings with stakeholders from across the country in August and September. This period of consultations will also allow the Working Group to have discussions with those who have made submissions and have raised issues which would benefit from further exploration and consideration.

It is expected that the TAWWG will publish their recommendations in spring 2020.

Terms of Reference

The Thoroughbred Aftercare Welfare Working Group will examine current arrangements and seek to make recommendations to ensure that lifetime health and welfare of the horse is of prime consideration for horses leaving the racing and breeding industry.

Specifically the panel will:

- 1.** Collate and examine current data, and consult all relevant and interested parties and agencies, to gain an accurate assessment of the number of thoroughbred horses retired from the racing and breeding industry annually and the fate of these horses.
- 2.** Collate, study, benchmark and assess the many and various programs currently in use by the thoroughbred racing and breeding industry to provide 're-homing' opportunities. This will include examination of global best practice and programs used successfully by other animal industries and horse breeds.
- 3.** Review the level of thoroughbred horse breeding needed to meet the needs of the racing industry but to prevent excessive breeding.
- 4.** Review federal, state and territory regulatory arrangements relevant to the ongoing welfare of horses, and particularly both racing and non-racing thoroughbreds, including the challenges and benefits of introducing a national traceability system for all horses.
- 5.** Identify opportunities for industry-led quality assurance schemes including the development of national standards for equine health, welfare, housing, handling, transportation and husbandry practices.
- 6.** Identify opportunities for structural improvement to existing arrangements for data collection and reporting, inter-jurisdictional co-ordination and national communications processes to ensure accurate industry information with regard to thoroughbred horses across Australia.
- 7.** Identify opportunities for appropriate further research and development to enhance the long-term welfare of thoroughbred horses across Australia.
- 8.** Make recommendations to enhance the welfare of all thoroughbred horses and therefore enhance the reputation of the thoroughbred industry as an industry that genuinely cares about the welfare of all thoroughbred horses.
- 9.** Give consideration to the regulatory framework and the effectiveness of current oversight and supervisory procedures and practices for facilities that process horses for human and animal consumption. This will include assessment of current levels of relevant education and training of management and workers in these facilities with respect to horse behaviour, management and welfare.

The Panel

Dr Denis Napthine (chair): A former Victorian premier, Denis also served as Racing Minister and has a deep understanding of the thoroughbred industry. Before entering politics he was a veterinarian and worked for the state government where he prosecuted a number of animal welfare cases.

Dr Bidda Jones: Bidda is the Chief Science and Strategy Officer for the RSPCA Australia and an Honorary Associate with the Sydney School of Veterinary Science. She is a strong advocate for improving animal welfare policies and has shared her insight on numerous national committees.

Dr Ken Jacobs: Ken is an equine veterinarian and has been in practice for over 40 years. He is a former director of the Australian Veterinary Association and past president of the Equine Veterinarians Australia. He is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. He helped establish the equine component of the veterinary science course at Charles Sturt University. He was also involved in the design and operation of Canberra Veterinary Hospital.

Jack Lake: Jack was a senior advisor on agricultural policy in the Hawke, Keating and Rudd governments and now assists companies such as Inghams with policy and government relations. He is a keen follower of racing and has enjoyed success as a part-owner of horses such as VRC Derby winner Preferment.

Steering Group

The panel will also have the assistance and advice of an industry steering group comprising leading trainer **Chris Waller**; **Neil Werrett**, Board Member of the Victoria Racing Club and part-owner of Black Caviar; **Vin Cox**, Managing Director of Godolphin Australia; **John Kelly**, owner of Newhaven Park Stud; **Martin Talty**, CEO of the Australian Jockeys' Association; **Andrew Nichol**, CEO of the Australian Trainers' Association; and **Tom Reilly**, CEO of Thoroughbred Breeders Australia.