



Equine welfare ABC TV 7.30 segment

The provision of appropriate care and attention of Thoroughbred horses is a critical priority in the administration of racing across Australia and for the people involved in the sport. Racing Australia shares the outrage at the appalling images of the gross mistreatment of horses revealed in the program.

Each year State and Territory racing authorities invest tens of millions of dollars in integrity, veterinary services and equine welfare programs to try and achieve the best possible outcomes for horses.

Since 2014, the sport's national body, Racing Australia, has introduced reforms to the Australian Rules of Racing (ARR) to strengthen integrity and equine welfare goals by ensuring authorities have access to the ownership and location details of horses, from birth until their retirement from racing.

Under the ARR, when a Thoroughbred retires from racing, its owners have an obligation to provide Racing Australia with the reasons for the horse's retirement, the name of the new owner and the proposed new location of the horse.

Each year Racing Australia's annual report provides information on the retirement of racehorses which, for the past three years, reveals almost 90% of Thoroughbreds enter the equestrian, pleasure or breeding sectors. One per cent were listed as being sent to abattoirs

Any subsequent changes in ownership or location of retired Thoroughbreds cannot be tracked as neither Racing Australia nor State or Territory racing authorities have the power or legal ability to do so.

One of the reasons Racing Australia supports the proposal for a National Traceability Register for All Horses is that it would provide federal and state animal welfare authorities access to ownership and location information for these Thoroughbreds. This matter is currently being considered by a Senate committee.

Thoroughbred horses represent approximately 10% of the national equine population (estimated at 1 million horses nationally). While racing authorities keep track of the owners and locations of Thoroughbreds during their careers, that is not true for most horses across Australia.

A National Horse Register would fill this gap, allow federal and state authorities access to ownership and location information and help improve equine welfare outcomes nationally.

It could also further strengthen Australia's biosecurity regime which is critical in reducing the risk of exotic disease and pest outbreaks.

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