

The life of most race horses is short and the end isn't pretty (Photo Courtesy "Horse Racing Kills").

Policy

The Animal Justice Party (AJP) is opposed to horse racing and the abuse of animals for "sport" and entertainment.

Key Objectives

1. As the industry cannot be regulated, rather than push for an integrity commission, the AJP seeks to ban horse racing, including jumps and harness racing.
Until then, interim measures include -
2. Prohibit the carrying and use of the whip and prohibit the use of tongue ties, spurs and twitches.
3. Prohibit the slaughter of racehorses registered under the Australian Rules of Racing (Racing Australia) and representative state and territory racing Acts.
4. Prohibit the racing of horses under three years of age.
5. Increase penalty units/ imprisonment terms for the illegal use of jiggers and doping.
6. Publish racehorses' birth-to-death records in a transparent, publicly accessible database.
7. Legislate the rehabilitation and rehoming of retired racehorses.
8. Decrease the number of race meetings.
9. Redirect government bailouts and subsidies to other sectors such as human and environmental health and education. Also use funds to assist those who work within the industry to retrain into new, non-exploitative employment.

Background

Numerous investigations¹ and reports have demonstrated the myriad adverse impacts the horse racing industry inflicts upon the thoroughbred horse. Horses are raced too young,

suffer internal bleeding through intense exercise, foals go "missing", they develop psychological and behavioural disorders, are electrically shocked, drugged, beaten, tortured and slaughtered. Horses used for racing are denied everything that is natural to them. Reports, records and penalties for cruelty are extremely lax while corporations and governments maintain their prop up investments of millions year after year.

Legislative framework

Racing Australia governs the industry through the *Australian Rules of Racing*². Each state and territory has a principal racing authority which further enacts subordinate legislation to follow and enforce the Australian rules. However, it is clear that these are usually not met or enforced. Division Five, AR50-52 states that Racing Australia must be *notified*³ by the owners and trainers when horses are retired, reasons for retirement, the location they are moved to and when they die. Section AR225 specifically states that horses are not to be euthanased unless a vet surgeon has certified in writing that this course of action is necessary. Yet, the reality is, *the industry does not track the trajectory*⁴. In 2019, the industry was allegedly shocked when *undercover investigations*⁵ identified thousands of racehorses at the Meramist abattoir (and others) being physically abused and slaughtered. The horses were identified from their racing branding as from both New South Wales and Queensland. The rules, promoted as protecting the welfare of the horses, failed dismally.

Wastage

Since only purebred thoroughbreds can participate in racing, the profitability of the breeding industry depends upon *many animals "exiting" the industry*⁶. Horses exit the industry due to injury and/or not being fast enough. *Exiting*⁷ is usually a *bullet or two*⁸ to the head, by the side of the racetrack, behind the racetrack, in a pen or at a knackery.

¹<https://horseracingkills.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/10-Reasons-Individual-FINAL.pdf>

²https://www.racingaustralia.horse/uploading/Australian_rules_of_Racing/Australian_Rules_of_Racing_01_April_2020.pdf

³<https://thoroughbredwelfare.horse/>

⁴<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/19/horse-slaughter-hypocrisy-irresponsibility-on-all-sides>

⁵<https://www.smh.com.au/sport/horse-racing-on-the-nose-industry-insiders-warn-20191020-p532hc.html>

⁶<https://thehorse.com/11134/australian-racehorse-wastage-evaluated/>

⁷https://www.animalsaustralia.org/issues/horse_racing.php

⁸<https://horseracingkills.com/2020/11/16/racing-tasmania-admits-racehorses-are-routinely-shot-in-the-head/>



Want a voice for animals in Parliament? Join, donate, or find out more about the Animal Justice Party at animaljusticeparty.org. You can also read our policies, here: animaljusticeparty.org/policieslist.

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Two year olds

It has been known for decades that at two years of age, the musculoskeletal and cardiovascular systems of horses have *not fully developed*⁹ and they are at a greater risk of injury. However, owners want to see a quick monetary return on their investment and the commercial industry *offers great incentives*¹⁰ for racing two year old horses. Many foals and yearlings *never*¹¹ *see a racetrack*¹², as incorrect conformity or unattractive traits, disease or *injury*¹³ claim them first before or during training. To quickly prepare for the yearling sales, young horses are pushed to gallop during intensive workouts instead of incremental training programs. As a result, they most often succumb to painful shin soreness or *fractures in their cannon bones*¹⁴. The fractures usually manifest as recurring lameness or breaks. Either way, their racing careers (and often lives) are over. This short-term view perpetuates an insidious industry.

The whip

The Australian Rules of Racing state (under rule AR132) (7):

- padded whips can be used
- riders that use their whip in an “excessive, unnecessary or improper manner” *may* be penalised if the horse shows no response or the whipping causes injury
- riders shall not use their whip more than 5 times before the 100 metre mark *except* when trying to “encourage his mount to improve”
- riders may use their whip, at their discretion, during the final 100 metres of the race.

This incoherent set of rules deem it acceptable to beat an exhausted animal a limited number of times during the race and then an unlimited number of times towards the end of the race, when the horse is at their most debilitated, across (usually) their most sensitive flank area. Outside of horse racing this would be considered animal cruelty and prosecutable by law. Despite the remarks made by horse racing supporters, *science*¹⁵ argues the whip causes a horse the same or a greater amount of pain as it would a human. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that the cultural belief that jockeys need whips for safety, steering or any other reason is *unsubstantiated*¹⁶.

Jiggers and doping

Taser-like devices, also known as “jiggers”, are used to *shock*¹⁷ horses to become agitated and therefore run faster. Despite the illegality of these devices, some racing participants still use them. Similarly, *illegal*¹⁸ *substances*¹⁹ such as cobalt are injected to enhance performance or hide injury. Cases regularly show up in steward reports, however, fines or penalties occur only when the act has been witnessed by a racing steward or authorised officer, and then, only if that steward or officer, in their discretion, wishes to fine or penalise those involved. In any case, the damage has already been done.

Tongue ties

Tongue ties are devices such as elastic bands and leather straps looped around the base of the horse’s tongue and tied around the lower jaw. According to the industry, the purpose of the ties are to increase the jockey’s control through the bit and improve respiration at speed for those with dorsal displacement of the soft palate (DDSP). However, equine studies in the *UK, USA*²⁰ and *Australia*²¹ resulted in partial, limited or no improvement in DDSP. The studies did return increased stress responses and behaviours such as gaping mouth, head tossing and flattened ears. Prolonged use of tongue ties often result in anxiety and head shyness, bleeding, bruising, permanently damaged tissue and lolling tongue.

Gambling

*Racing Australia*²² reported a turnover (net sales) of \$21 billion for thoroughbred racing for the 2019 - 2020 period. However, the industry is not economically viable on its own, and must be subsidised by governments. For example, in Victoria alone, the state government subsidises the industry for \$35 million per year, while the social costs of problem gambling, including domestic violence, family unit breakdowns, financial hardship, low work productivity, poor mental health and suicide cost the state *over three times the turnover*²³.

The horse racing industry preserves violence against animals and violence against fellow human beings. For further information, please refer to the AJP Gambling policy.

⁹<https://www.ava.com.au/policy/78-racing-two-year-old-thoroughbreds>

¹⁰<https://www.racingpost.com/news/scrapping-of-two-year-old-races-would-create-genuine-champions/296318>

¹¹<https://www.ava.com.au/policy/78-racing-two-year-old-thoroughbreds>

¹²<https://www.ava.com.au/policy/78-racing-two-year-old-thoroughbreds>

¹³<https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg13718652-600/>

¹⁴<https://canadianthoroughbred.com/magazine/training/starting-2-year-old-racehorses/>

¹⁵<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/10/11/2094>

¹⁶<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/10/11/1985>

¹⁷<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/footage-of-horses-getting-electric-shocks-could-be-crucial-in-case-against-trainer-darren-weir>

¹⁸<https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-is-horse-racing-cruel-20191018-p5325q.html>

¹⁹<https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-is-horse-racing-cruel-20191018-p5325q.html>

²⁰<https://horseracingkills.com/issues/tongue-ties/>

²¹https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321398127_The_effect_of_tongue-tie_application_on_stress_responses_in_resting_horses

²²<https://www.racingaustralia.horse/Aboutus/FactBook.aspx>

²³<https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/publications/assessing-gambling-related-harm-in-victoria-a-public-health-perspective-69/>



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