



28th March 2019

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee

Inquiry into the feasibility of a National Horse Traceability Register - Supplementary Submission

RSPCA Australia has already made a submission on the 4th March for this inquiry. However, after further canvassing RSPCA Societies, we submit this supplementary submission. We believe this additional information will be of value to the committee in their deliberations.

The RSPCA would like to emphasise the importance of registering all horses, not just racehorses. Compared to other livestock and companion animals, horses are largely unregulated, yet they can be expensive to care for, require regular care and maintenance, are highly visible and can be dangerous if not handled correctly. Horses are very popular for pleasure riding and competition in addition to racing. In Victoria, the number of horses used for sport and recreation is estimated to be 600,000.

Serious welfare issues can impact horses due to overpopulation and unregistered breeding. For example, a significant issue facing RSPCA inspectors involve owners who do not reside on the property where the horse is located. This is either because they are on agistment properties or on land owned/leased by the owner without a dwelling. This adds a layer of complexity to determine ownership for legal purposes. It can also make it difficult to determine whether an animal has been abandoned or not.

The registry should include horses born overseas and imported into Australia, as well as frozen semen imported into Australia. The horse's date of birth, transfer of ownership and death should also be captured in the registry.

Potential registry models

The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) has a good model of animal management and traceability that could be used as a reference. Most agricultural departments across Australia define horses as 'livestock' and bar horses are properly tracked and regulated through the NLIS. Therefore, there also must be consistency between the NLIS and the national horse registry system.

Further, Victoria is currently developing a Pet Exchange Register to track the transfer of ownership of domestic cats and dogs. A model similar to this could be implemented for horses, including mandatory microchipping and registration via councils, or some other body.

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Internationally, the recently developed equine register in the United Kingdom may provide a good framework in the development of an Australian registry. Please see: <https://www.equineregister.co.uk/home> and <https://www.gov.uk/horse-passport> and <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/761/contents/made>

Yours sincerely

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