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D/2019/810429



NSW Police Force
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9 September 2019

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

Dear Committee Secretary,

**TO THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEES ON RURAL AND
REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT**

**'INQUIRY INTO THE FEASIBILITY OF A NATIONAL HORSE
TRACEABILITY REGISTER FOR ALL HORSES'**

The New South Wales Police Force welcomes the invitation to respond to the Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport ('SSCRRAT') inquiry into the feasibility of a National Horse Traceability Register for all horses.

On 17 June 2015, NSW Police Force Rural Crime Investigators, presented a case to the Rural Crime Advisory Group (RCAG) highlighting the need for improved movement documentation and identification of horses at a national level. The issues highlighted by the Rural Crime Investigators were accepted by the RCAG and delegated to Department of Primary Industries for review.

In response to the terms of reference outlined by the SSCRRAT, below is the NSW Police Force response which has been compiled by the Rural Crime Prevention Team.

a. The existence and adequacy of state or industry-based registers.

Although there are various industry-based identification systems in place, the need for consistency, accountability and compliance to ensure traceability must be a priority. The overarching outcome is to maintain the integrity of the horse industry at a national and international level.

The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) has been in place since 2004 and currently captures details for cattle, sheep, pigs and goats. It is envisaged that one database, capable of recording various information for a range of livestock industries (including horses), should be the first consideration. Modifications to the NLIS would provide a suitable web-based database which already has a solid basis to build this register.

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It is recommended that a permanent identifier, such as a microchip similar to those used for cats and dogs with a unique radio frequency identification (RFID), should be used for horses. It would be recommended that the microchip is implanted in the horse as soon as practical and not only when the horse is moved off the originating property. The unique RFID number is linked to the property identification code (PIC) where the horse is housed. Movement of the horse, including the reference number of the approval transport documentation, is recorded on the register / database as per existing requirement for cattle.

b. *The benefits of a national register, including for animal welfare, biosecurity safety (including for the prevention and management of Emergency Animal Diseases, such as equine influenza and African Horse Sickness), backyard breeding and the integrity of trade in horses.*

The key objective for the NSW Police Force in supporting the creation of a national register for all horses, is to enhance the available resources during a criminal investigation. These matters are predominately stock theft and fraud. To have access to a register that contains details of movement (life history), scanned approved transport documentation, current location, ownership details and identification details would be a valuable asset for the NSW Police Force. Stock theft is not only a criminal offence. This type of theft contributes to the increase risk of a biosecurity outbreak due to unauthorised movement of livestock.

The NSW Police Force Rural Crime Prevention Team has on occasion found it difficult to trace stolen or substituted horses unless an animal already has a permanent form of identification (i.e. Racing Thoroughbreds are required to be microchipped and registered). Its own experiences checking horse movements during the Equine Influenza outbreak convinced Rural Crime Investigators of the merits of a National Traceability Register for all horses.

The sale of horses, fraudulent or otherwise, which are unfit for the purpose of the buyer is a significant public safety issue. There have been previous instances where an investigator, who is a very experienced and skilled horsemen, assessed several horses which had been sold to buyers as suitable for children. These horses were deemed to be 'unbroken' and dangerous.

The investigator had serious concerns that if a child had been placed on one of these horses, the child would have sustained serious injuries. Unfortunately, this was the case when Miss Sarah WAUGH was provided an unsuitable horse to ride at the Dubbo TAFE on 24 March 2009 and died from her injuries after falling from the horse.

Amending legislation, similar to movement of cattle, to enforce the obligation of horse owners to participate in the national register and record transport movement, would provide police with substantial supporting evidence during these types of criminal investigation.

c. *Overseas models of national tracking systems for horses.*

There are various overseas models available for comparison. However, due to the fact Australia already has in place the NLIS which is currently used for cattle, sheep, pigs and goats, it is supported that this system is modified to capture horse identification and movement details.

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d. Funding, enforcement and penalty implications.

The Biosecurity Regulations would need to be amended to reflect a mandatory requirement to permanently identify all horses. It is suggested that this identification must be completed by a predetermined age or prior to the horse leaving the property of birth.

In the interest of biosecurity concerns, consideration should be given to reassessing Section 84, Local Land Services Regulation 2014:

Other circumstances when restrictions on transport of stock by vehicle on road do not apply

For the purposes of section 120 (5) (d) of the Act, the following are prescribed as circumstances in which section 120 of the Act does not apply to the transport of stock by vehicle on a road:

- (a) when horses are being transported to or from any agricultural show, exhibition, gymkhana, pony club meeting or similar function,
- (b) when racehorses or harness racing horses are being transported from one place to another,
- (c) when horses are moved to or from any place for use as working horses.

It is proposed that an enforceable National Vendor Declaration (NVD) is developed for movement of horses which must be completed and signed by the owner/authorised representative (eg manager). Failure to complete this form correctly for relevant movement should be a breach of legislation. The duplication and retention requirements for this documentation would be the same as for movement of cattle.

The horse NVD would be a similar format and record similar information as the cattle NVD. This information would include: property of origin and destination, livestock description, vehicle and driver details and agent declaration.

We would propose that the following points are also included on the horse NVD:

1. Has the owner stated on this form owned this/these horse/s since birth?

- | | | | |
|-----|----|---|---|
| YES | NO | If no, how long ago was the horse/s obtained or purchased | |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less than 2 months• 2 to 6 months• 6 to 12 months• Longer than 12 months |

2. Has any of the horse/s received vaccines for equine type viruses?

- | | | |
|-----|----|--|
| YES | NO | If yes, what were the vaccine and dates. |
|-----|----|--|

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3. Are any of the horse/s in this consignment still within a withholding period (WHP) or export slaughter interval (ESI) following treatment with any veterinary drug, chemical, wormer?

YES

NO

Don't know

If yes, please supply details.

- Chemical Product
- Treatment date
- WHS or ESI

4. Horse Education

* Unbroken

* Green Broke

* Broken

* Unknown

5. Rider suitability

* Lead horse beginner

* Beginner unassisted

* Intermediate

* Experienced

* Unknown

The NSW Police Force looks forward to working with the SSCRRAT to progress the creation of a National Horse Traceability Register for all horses.

Geoff McKECHNIE, APM
Assistant Commissioner, Western Region
Corporate Sponsor for Rural Crime
NSW Police Force

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