

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

INTERIM REPORT
ON

THE RACING INDUSTRY

by the
Senate Select Committee
on Animal Welfare

June 1990

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Senator R.J. Bell (Tasmania)***

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* From July 1985

** From September 1987

*** From May 1990

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Senator Jack Evans (Western Australia)

- Member December 1983 to June 1985

Senator J.M. Hearn (Tasmania)

- Member December 1983 to June 1985

Senator the Hon. D.B. Scott (New South Wales)

- Member December 1983 to June 1985

Senator J.R. Siddons (Victoria)

- Member July 1985 to August 1985

Senator N.K. Sanders (Tasmania)

- Member July 1985 to March 1990

Senator J. Morris (New South Wales)

- Member September 1987 to May 1990 and

- Chairman September 1987 to August 1989

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CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Terms of Reference	1
Conduct of Inquiry	2
Racing in Australia	3
Major Animal Welfare Issues	5
Training and Racing of Unfit Animals	5
Racing of Two-Year Olds	6
Drug Use and Detection	7
Training and Racing Track Design and Surfaces	9
The Use of Whips	10
Jump Racing, Hurdling and Steeplechasing Research	11
Conclusion	12
Appendix A - List of Witnesses Who Appeared Before the Committee at Public Hearings	15

**INTERIM REPORT ON
ANIMAL WELFARE ASPECTS OF
THE RACING INDUSTRY**

Terms of Reference

1.1 The racing industry inquiry is the seventh specific inquiry undertaken since the Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare was established in November 1983 to inquire into and report upon 'the question of animal welfare in Australia, with particular reference to:

- (a) interstate and overseas commerce in animals;
- (b) wildlife protection and harvesting;
- (c) animal experimentation;
- (d) codes of practice of animal husbandry for all species; and
- (e) the use of animals in sport.'

1.2 To date the Committee has presented six reports to the Senate.

Export of Live Sheep from Australia	1985
Dolphins and Whales in Captivity	1985
Kangaroos	1988
Animal Experimentation	1989
Sheep Husbandry	1989
Intensive Livestock Production	1990

1.3 The Committee will complete its inquiry into the question of animal welfare in Australia over the next twelve months with its investigation of the following matters referred to it on 31 May 1990:

- . the implications for animal welfare of the culling of large feral animals in the Northern Territory;
- . the implications for animal welfare of the transport of livestock in Australia; and
- . the implications for equine welfare in competitive events other than racing.

1.4 A call for submissions on these matters will be made shortly.

Conduct of Inquiry

1.5 Issues of concern about the use of animals in sport and particularly in racing were raised with the Committee when it was first established and representations made periodically since then. As a result the Committee decided to investigate animal welfare aspects of thoroughbred, standardbred and greyhound racing and called for submissions on the subject in May 1988.

1.6 At that time the Committee was finalising its animal experimentation and sheep husbandry inquiries and was also investigating intensive livestock production and so did not begin inspections and public hearings on the racing industry until towards the middle of 1989.

1.7 Public hearings have been held in Sydney (April and July 1989), and Melbourne (June and November 1989). A list of witnesses is at Appendix A. Formal inspections have been undertaken as follows:

1.8 Flat racing - Rosehill Racecourse Sydney (July 1989), Flemington Racecourse Melbourne (November 1989) and Dubbo City Racecourse Dubbo (February 1990).

1.9 Harness racing - Harold Park Sydney (December 1989), and Harness Racing Club Dubbo (February 1990).
Greyhound racing - Olympic Park Melbourne (November 1990), and Dawson Park Dubbo (February 1990).

1.10 The Committee had intended presenting its report before the end of this the 35th Parliament when two of its members including the present Chairman retired from the Senate. Due to competing priorities the complexity of some of the issues raised and limited staff resources (a significant reduction over the past year) the Committee decided that to do the subject justice and to consider in more detail a number of areas of concern it would take a little more time and present a comprehensive report later in the year. The Committee proposes to report on or before the last sitting day in October 1990.

1.11 This interim report highlights the issues which will be covered and those matters of particular complexity.

Racing in Australia

1.12 Racing is Australia's third largest industry with an annual turnover of more than \$20 billion. A great many Australians are dependent on racing for their livelihood (breeders, veterinarians, livestock agents, transporters, stablehands, trainers, jockeys, farmers, racecourse workers, administrators, and licenced bookmakers) and many more for sport and entertainment. The Australian public receives a significant benefit from the industry via the earnings it generates through taxes levied on betting turnover.

1.13 Racing is a sport and it is a business with financial investment at all levels. The actual racing of an animal is the end product of a very involved and complex process that begins with the breeder and ends on the race track. It involves people with diverse specialities and interests which link together both

directly and indirectly. There are substantial financial rewards for those who are successful either as breeders, owners, trainers, jockeys and punters. The prospect of financial gain is now the major incentive for most participants in the industry. Strong evidence was submitted that the industry is profit driven.

1.14 Success in the racing industry is governed by the pursuit of excellence in a very competitive environment and this has implications for welfare. This is not to say that participants in the industry do not care for their animals but in an environment where economic viability is paramount welfare may at times be compromised.

1.15 There is considerable evidence to suggest that racing animals enjoy racing. Nevertheless it is accepted that racing in general involves exploitation and many participating animals no matter what their class or age sustain injuries, some of which prove fatal.

1.16 The welfare of racing animals cannot be separated from the tracks on which they race, the drugs with which they are treated, and the conditions in which they are required to live. The main welfare issues raised in this inquiry involve administration, legislation and regulation; breeding and breeding establishments; training and racing track design; racing and training facilities; stabling and stable design; training and training practices; drugs and drug detection; research and statistics; rationalisation of country racing venues; education; transport; and wastage.

Some specific concerns under these general headings have been:

- Self-regulation
- Racing of two-year olds and immature horses
- The racing of unfit animals
- Excessive or arduous racing commitments
- Incorrect and severe training regimes

- Excessive use of mechanical training devices
- The use of whips in horse and harness racing
- Hurdle and steeplechase racing
- Live baiting of greyhounds
- The design of tracks and their influence on injuries and safety
- Sulky design
- Track conditions
- Eye injuries
- Exercise-induced pulmonary haemorrhage
- Illegal use of performance-enhancing and therapeutic drugs
- Over-breeding and poor conformation
- Conduct of breeding establishments with particular regard to health standards
- Effects of long-term stabling
- Disposal of retired animals.

1.17 A general issue underlying all of these aspects has been the extent to which thoroughbred and harness horse racing and greyhound racing is conducted by representatives of these industries.

Major Animal Welfare Issues

1.18 A number of particularly complex and contentious issues were raised during the inquiry. These included unfit animals, the racing of two-year olds, drug use and detection, race-track ergonomics, use of whips, and jump racing. The issue of increased research funding was also raised.

Training and Racing of Unfit Animals

1.19 In all age groups the extent of injury to a horse during training and racing can be affected by its level of fitness. Reaching and maintaining peak fitness in racing animals is

difficult. Issues of concern in this area have focussed on training regimes, and other issues such as muscle "tying up", lameness, sprains, fractures, exercise-induced pulmonary haemorrhage, lactic acid fatigue, heart strain as well as poor conformation.

1.20 There are major sub-clinical factors which affect performance and cause injury and which, according to evidence, the majority of trainers and owners are not aware of because they are not visible under normal conditions.

Racing of Two-Year Olds

1.21 Racing of two-year old horses is a popular and growing part of the racing industry with feature races such as the Golden Slipper attracting very large prizemoney.

1.22 The racing clubs support and promote this type of racing. The races are over shorter distances and the chances of success by either the very expensive prize yearlings of the previous year or conversely the unknown "battler" lend glamour and excitement. At a time of falling public support on-course such racing helps to attract crowds to the course.

1.23 The popularity and potential financial returns from two-year old racing have encouraged a shift in emphasis in bloodstock breeding towards quick-maturing lines promising good sprinting ability.

1.24 Two-year old racing is an animal welfare issue because it is argued that horses are trained and raced before they have reached sufficient level of physical maturity. As a result it is claimed that the rate at which these horses break down either in training or racing is unacceptably high.

1.25 Much of the discussion on indicators of physical maturity in horses has concentrated on the epiphyseal plates. These are cartilage structures at the end of the major bones in the leg. With maturity the plate becomes part of the bone. The closure of these plates occurs at between twenty-three and twenty-nine months. Opinions vary as to whether complete closure should be a precondition for the strenuous exercise involved in training and racing.

1.26 It has been suggested in evidence that against the background of the enormous financial investment which the breeding industry has in two-year old racing, there have been efforts to establish that the "wastage" amongst this age group is due to lack of ability and not injury and that this is not confirmed by individual veterinary specialist practitioners.

Drug Use and Detection

1.27 The Committee received a large volume of evidence on the issue of the extent of drug use in the racing industry. Some evidence suggested that the practice was very widespread throughout all sectors of the industry, while others suggested that in relation to the number of animals involved in the industry and the number of races held, drug use was not significant.

1.28 The Committee will consider the complex mix of issues in its inquiry report in respect of drug use and involving go slow drugs, performance enhancing drugs and therapeutic drugs. Regarding the use of drugs, the Committee received evidence from several individuals and organisations that argued for a ban on the use of any substance which may have an adverse effect on the welfare of animals in racing. Other contributors, however, argued that the ban should not be so all-embracing. Some evidence presented to the Committee also argued that the genuine veterinary treatment aimed at improving the welfare of animals could be impeded if a distinction between therapeutic and non-therapeutic substances was not emphasised.

1.29 It was put to the Committee during the inquiry that the racing industry required a drug surveillance, detection and testing system that constituted a major deterrent to the illegal use of substances.

1.30 A number of individuals and organisations suggested various ways of achieving this end. These included:

- improved detection, particularly of pain suppressants and non-therapeutic substances;
- research into new drugs be given a high priority when new laboratory testing facilities are developed;
- greater attention to the illegal traffic in "prescription only" drugs, used without veterinary direction;
- greater uniformity in the testing methods in all Australian race testing laboratories;
- an increase in the use of drug testing procedures;
- improved drug detection at non-metropolitan tracks;
- the funding of research and development of testing procedures out of TAB revenue;
- the imposition of penalties, ranging from heavy fines to life bans for the use of prohibited substances;
- the possibility of freezing samples for later testing in order to detect drug use as new tests become available; and
- the amalgamation of some drug testing laboratories to achieve greater efficiency.

Other concerns raised were:

- the source and level of resources necessary to ensure efficient and effective drug detection facilities for the racing industry; and
- effectiveness of the role of State Governments, the clubs and those directly involved in the industry, namely stewards, trainers and veterinarians in drug detection and prevention.

1.31 The Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts reported in its recently released Drugs in Sport Report that anabolic steroids use is a health issue for thoroughbred and standardbred horses and greyhounds. The Committee recommended a ban on the use of anabolic steroids for racing animals. It further recommended that the Senate refer the question of risk of physical and psychological damage to this Select Committee.

Training and Racing Track Design and Surfaces

1.32 Racetrack ergonomics and track surface have been cited as a major cause of injury to racing animals. Locomotor injuries resulting from track design, construction, and maintenance are a major welfare problem. Track design including radius of turns, track camber and surface quality and type in regard to performance and injury incidence is the subject of much debate in the industry.

1.33 Evidence to this inquiry has highlighted the enormous stresses which are on the body of a racing animal at top speed and in the turns. A maximum burst of speed, either on the training track or in a race, can put an animal dangerously close to or beyond its maximum physical capacity.

1.34 It is clear that racetrack design improvements would be an important step in advancing the welfare of thoroughbred and standardbred horses and greyhounds.

The Use of Whips

1.35 Whips are used in both thoroughbred and harness racing. The justification for their use is twofold:

- to ensure that a horse races to the limit of its ability; and
- to provide the rider or driver with an additional aid to controlling the horse (although this is of less relevance to harness racing).

1.36 The use of whips is regulated by the governing bodies of both sports and the way in which a whip may be used is clearly defined. Stewards are empowered to fine or suspend jockeys and drivers for excessive or incorrect use of whips and canes. The issue is made complex by other rules which require a horse to be 'ridden out' or visibly urged in the 'run home'. However it is not uncommon to see horses under the whip or cane well before the finish of races or excessively whipped towards the finishing line.

1.37 Those urging a ban on the use of whips argue that it is cruel and unnecessary and its use encourages poor technique in jockeys who rely on it to control the animal in place of other means.

1.38 The industry argues that the whip provides an important safety control method under conditions which are fraught with danger. It is argued that problems would occur if whips were suddenly banned as riders, drivers and horses have been trained to their use - which includes guiding horses and avoiding interference as well as urging extra effort.

Jump Racing, Hurdling and Steeplechasing

1.39 Horse racing over jumps and hurdles is conducted by clubs in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. The continuation of jump racing in these States is a matter of controversy. This Committee has been urged by animal welfare organisations to recommend a total ban in Australia of racing over obstacles.

1.40 The opponents of jump racing are not opposed to jumping as such but to the combination of jumping and racing which in their view increases the risks involved to an unacceptable level.

1.41 The design of, and materials used in, the construction of hurdles was an area of concern highlighted during the inquiry. The Committee has been asked to consider whether the hindlegs of horses should be compulsorily taped to avoid damage from so-called 'brush' fences.

1.42 Proponents of the sport argue that jumping races cannot be singled out from horseracing in general as being of special concern on the grounds of welfare. It is argued that a double standard exists in the reporting of flat race fatalities and injuries and similar incidents occurring in jump races.

Research

1.43 There has been a strong call for increased funding of research into the problems faced by racing animals. It has been argued that the level of funding of research and training from gambling revenues in Australia is miniscule by comparison with countries like the United Kingdom.

1.44 Compilation and analysis of statistics regarding injuries alone would immediately highlight the range and incidence of the problems encountered.

1.45 Suggested areas that would benefit from research include:

- (a) improving the design and maintenance of tracks to reduce the incidence of injuries;
- (b) efficient and safe exercise programs to produce fitness in the least possible time;
- (c) pharmacology of therapeutic agents, including clearance times in performance animals and the safe use of anti-inflammatory drugs;
- (d) the efficacy of thermocautery (firing) and counter-irritants (blistering) in the treatment of bone, tendon and joint injuries in horses;
- (e) compilation of statistics on injuries e.g. in relation to age, sex, breeding, track design; and
- (f) the relationship of shoeing and shoe design to injuries commonly encountered in race horses.

Conclusion

1.46 Animal welfare issues are relevant at all stages of a racing animal's life and a key element is the attitude of those directly responsible for their care. The Committee received considerable evidence during the inquiry that concern for the welfare of competing animals was a prime consideration for those involved in the industry, ranging from breeders and owners to racing administrators.

1.47 However, some evidence presented highlighted areas where welfare considerations may be seen to be compromised; other areas where deficiencies in current practices have been the subject of

complaint and improvements could be made; and still other areas where those directly involved in the industry could take a greater role in ensuring the welfare of the animals is more adequately protected.

1.48 The full report of this inquiry will discuss and examine these areas and make recommendations aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the care and protection of racing animals.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A.R. Devlin".

A.R. Devlin
Chairman

LIST OF WITNESSES WHO APPEARED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies
Represented by: Dr J.H. Auty, Honorary Technical
Adviser
Ms G.K. Oogjes, Director

Australian and New Zealand Greyhound Association
Represented by: Mr G.C.L. Fitzpatrick

Australian Bloodhorse Breeders, New South Wales
Represented by: Mr D. Bay, Secretary
Mr C.A. McAlpine, President

Australian Conference of Principal Racing Clubs
Represented by: Dr J.M. Bourke, Veterinary Surgeon,
Victoria Racing Club
Mr R. Johnson, Secretary, Victoria
Racing Club
Mr R.D. King, Manager, Flemington
Racecourse, Victoria Racing Club
Mr L.P. Lalor, Chairman of Stewards,
Victoria Racing Club
Dr J.P. McCaffrey, Veterinary Surgeon,
Victoria Racing Club

Australian Equine Research Foundation
Represented by: Professor R.M. Butterfield, President
Associate Professor R.J. Rose,
Research Grantee

Australian Greyhound Racing Association
Represented by: Mr J. Neary, President
Mr J.R. Stephens, Delegate

Australian Harness Racing Council
Represented by: His Honour A.J. Goran, AM, QC,
Honorary Legal Adviser
Dr E.C. Manea, President

Australian Horse Council
Represented by: Dr R.R.R. Pascoe, Honorary Secretary

Australian Jumping Racing Association Inc.

Represented by: Mr J.D. Adams, Secretary
Mr D.R. Heather, Committee Member
Mr R.E. Maund, Committee Member

Australian Veterinary Association, New South Wales

Represented by: Dr J.B. Smith, Honorary Secretary
Dr M. Heynes, Vice-President, Special
Interest Group, Australian Equine
Veterinary Association
Dr C. Basset, Convenor, Racing
Subcommittee, Australian Equine
Veterinary Association
Dr C.M. Boemo, President, Australian
Greyhound Veterinary Association

Conroy, Mr P.E., Owner/Trainer, Devon Meadows, Victoria

Greyhound Racing Control Board of Queensland

Represented by: Dr C.D. Danalis, Chairman

Greyhound Racing Control Board of Victoria

Represented by: Mr N.J. Banks, Retired Deputy Chairman
Mr H.L. Caruana, Assistant Secretary

Greyhound Racing Control Board of New South Wales

Represented by: Mr R.J. Cartwright, Secretary
Mr P.J. Devery, Consultant

Harness Racing Board

Represented by: Dr P. Swann, Chief Executive
Mr J.R. Osborne, Chairman of Stewards
Dr W.B. Gilbo, Veterinarian

Hunt Clubs Association of Victoria

Represented by: Mr J.P. Myhill, Chairman

Ireland, Mr B., Civil and Structural Engineer, West Pennant Hill,
New South Wales

Moller, Miss J., Owner/Trainer, Devon Meadows, Victoria

National Coursing Association of Victoria

Represented by: Mr G.C.L. Fitzpatrick, Secretary

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Victoria)
Represented by: Mr P.J. Barber, State Director
Dr H.J. Wirth, President

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, New South
Wales
Represented by: Dr D. Butcher, Executive Director
Mr C.O. Meader, Senior Inspector
Mr G.R. Pussell, Inspector

Victorian Country Racing Council
Represented by: Mr C.R. Carmichael, Chairman
Mr J.H. Shannon, Secretary

Victorian Department of Sport and Recreation
Represented by: Mr P.J. Power, Director, Racing and
Gaming Division

Walsh, Mr J.S., Sulky Manufacturer, Woronora, New South Wales