

**Submission
No 121**

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP ROSEHILL RACECOURSE

Name: Ms Cheryl Forrest-Smith

Date Received: 18 July 2024

Submission to the Inquiry into the Proposal to Develop Rosehill Racecourse

Dear Select Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry regarding the proposal to develop Rosehill Racecourse in NSW. I have grave concerns about potential impacts on Thoroughbred welfare, which fall under the Terms of Reference (g) *“the impact on animal welfare and any integrity concerns associated with the proposal which relate to animal welfare, and (h) any other related matters.”*

I understand that the Australian Turf Club (ATC) is likely to benefit by up to \$10 billion from the sale of Rosehill. Regardless of the type of development at Rosehill, I am concerned that such a large amount of money will allow the racing industry to expand and intensify its operations in ways that may negatively impact the lives of Thoroughbreds. I hope instead that the ATC will view the sale funds as an opportunity to improve the welfare of NSW racehorses. This would also help to improve its somewhat tarnished image. To date however, the racing industry has demonstrated little genuine concern for its racehorses, and is notorious for a lack of transparency regarding the fate of horses who exit racing.

I support the proposal for Rosehill Racecourse to be sold and developed for purposes other than racing. My support depends upon the use to which the sale monies are put, particularly those which cause further negative impacts on Thoroughbreds.

I request that the NSW Government intervenes to impose some conditions on the ATC, regarding use of the potential \$10 billion Rosehill sale income. The sale of Rosehill presents an opportunity for NSW racing to make a genuine contribution to the welfare of racehorses. A lack of funds will no longer be an excuse.

I would like to see the sale monies used to benefit Thoroughbred racehorses as listed below:

1. Ensure lifelong traceability of every horse in the NSW racing industry.
2. Fund a safe, lifelong retirement for every horse in the NSW racing industry.
3. Instigate immediate action to improve racehorse welfare on the racetrack and off track by replacing current standards of welfare with those based on the 2020 Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment, and require that members of the racing industry are educated accordingly.
4. Provide a fund to help transition members of the racing industry into professions outside racing.

Please see my 11-page submission following. I appreciate you taking the time to fully read it, and strongly urge you to view the video links.

Yours faithfully,

Cheryl Forrest-Smith

Introduction

NSW is a major state in the Australian Thoroughbred racing industry, and accounts for almost 30% of all tracks, race meetings, races and starts. In 2023, NSW also comprised 29% of individual racing Thoroughbreds (10,534 animals), and 38% of Broodmares (7,123 mares), who birthed 5,778 foals, being 45% of Australian foals. The sale of Rosehill Racecourse will have a major impact on racing in NSW and of course the surrounding area. This huge financial windfall is an opportunity for racing to properly address the many animal welfare concerns that pervade the industry.

1. Horse Traceability Register

The potential \$10B sale income from the Rosehill racecourse would enable Racing NSW to set up its own traceability register, ensuring transparency into, and traceability of all Thoroughbred horses born into the NSW racing industry. In doing so, all un-registered foals, breeding horses or ex-racehorses would be accounted for, and the responsibility for their welfare could be traced back to their owners at any point in time.

2. Rehabilitation and retirement plan for racehorses

The racing industry has a moral obligation to look after all the racehorses it breeds. To date, the racing industry's promises to rehabilitate and rehome their retired animals have proven inadequate and insufficient. An estimated 3,500 Thoroughbred horses exit racing in NSW each year, that simply cannot be accommodated by pony clubs, private buyers, and other rehoming programs. The racing industry does not know, and refuses to disclose any information about the whereabouts of these horses.

“After being forced to run and risk their lives in the ‘sport of kings’, heartbreaking investigation footage reveals what the ‘final race’ looks like for thousands of Australian horses every year.

In filthy slaughterhouses and knackerries, they're sworn at, kicked, beaten and slaughtered in front of their companions. Their flesh is exported overseas for human consumption, or sold locally for pet food — some of which ends up in the dinner bowls of fellow victims of the racing industry: [greyhounds](#).” – Animals Australia

Please take a moment to view the ABC's '7.30' extensive investigation that revealed widespread atrocities and brutal slaughter of racehorses in slaughterhouses and knackerries in NSW and Qld:

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-17/the-dark-side-of-the-horse-racing-industry/11614022?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=mail&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web

“We're talking about destroying horses on an industrial scale, we're seeing animals suffering. I don't think anybody in the [racing] industry could ever defend this.” - Professor Paul McGreevy, Veterinarian

And it continues to this day:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a499zfQh7Lc>

I urge the NSW Government to ensure that a properly funded rehabilitation and rehoming program is implemented to ensure the lifelong retirement of all current and future Thoroughbred horses involved in the NSW racing industry.

3. Breeding

Horses are bred based on industry demand without any consideration for their welfare after racing. Approximately one third of all horses bred for racing will not even make it to the racetrack. Mares are typically bred from every year until they exit at around the age of 10, with very little hope of being re-homed. The racing industry keeps no publicly available records of mares exiting breeding.

Wastage

“Each year in Australia, thousands of horses are bred in the relentless search for ‘winners’ – up to half of these young horses will never see the track. And of those who do make it to the track, not every single one of them can be a ‘place-getter’ and achieve ‘success’ for their owner.

‘Wastage’ is the term used by the industry to describe these horses who aren’t ‘up to scratch’ – and their fate is grim. Thousands of thoroughbreds are sold at auctions each year for a few hundred dollars, only to be trucked away and ‘processed’ into ‘pet meat’ – horses like Nature’s Child who was still listed on the website of Racing Victoria as ‘spelling’ (ie. resting) when she was brutally killed at a Victorian knackery. The [investigation footage](#), and please view here <https://www.farmtransparency.org/videos?id=87ed2c43c0>



A horse being slaughtered at an Australian knackery.
Image credit: Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses

I urge the NSW Government to put a cap on breeding numbers, and make the NSW racing industry responsible for the welfare of all the horses they breed and have profited from. Funding could be provided by the sale of Rosehill Racecourse.

4. Animal Welfare in Racing

The racing industry clearly demonstrates that it puts profit above animal welfare. The racing industry compromises Thoroughbred welfare through its breeding programs, its day-to-day and racetrack treatment of the horses, and directly causes Thoroughbreds' early deaths on track and at slaughterhouses.

Deaths

- *At least 139 horses were killed on track for a number of reasons, most commonly for catastrophic front limb injury (46)*
- *On average at least one horse will die on Australian racetracks every 2.5 days*
- *At least nine horses died from cardiac causes*
- *The state with the highest recorded deaths was NSW (55) followed by VIC (37) and QLD (20)*
- *Fifty-five of the horses that were reported to have been killed had been raced as two-year-olds*
- *Ten horses were only two years old when they died on track*
- *All states failed on several occasions to upload race replays where a horse died. NSW was the worst culprit, editing or failing to upload replays where a horse died on at least seven occasions.*

*Source: Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses study from 01.08.21 to 31.07.22:
<https://horseracingkills.com/issues/deathwatch/>*

Cruelty on race day

The effects of cruelty on the racetrack can be seen on television every race day – horses breaking down, distressed, injured and their deaths hidden from the public behind a green screen:

- *The 2022-2023 death toll is 168 horses – 29 higher than last year, and the highest on record.*
- *The state with the highest recorded deaths was New South Wales with fifty-three deaths, followed by Queensland with forty and Victoria with thirty-nine.*

Please view here: <https://youtu.be/62DlumvI9CA?si=aXdI7EDXSLrmcYez>

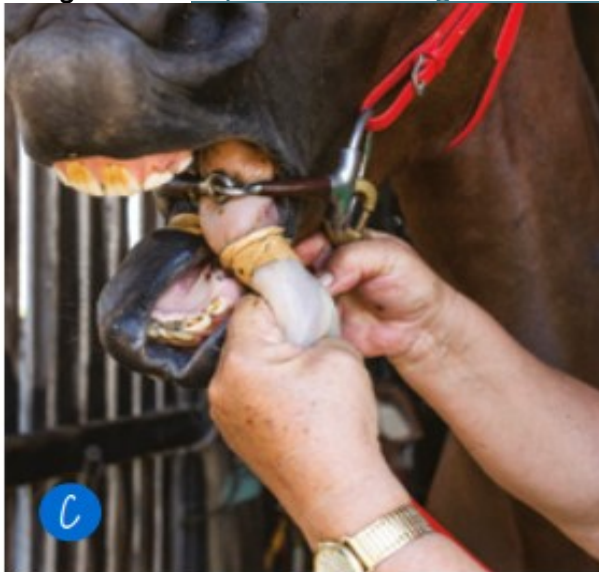
Some common cruelty includes:

- Bits <https://horseracingkills.com/bits/>

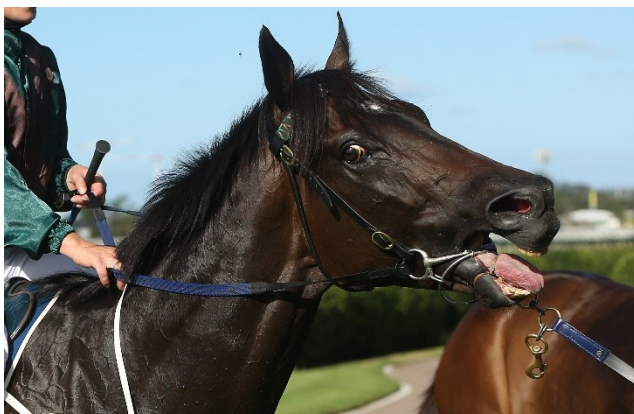


Injuries from bit use range from lesions in soft tissue and bruising, to chronic impediment of a horse's ability to breathe or swallow normally. The bit induces such high levels of pain which, due to its intensity and location, can override all other pain a horse might experience, including fear.

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



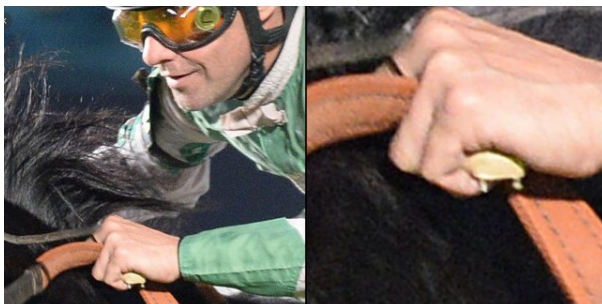
How tongue ties are used: <https://youtu.be/ZaD-ebBzds>



- Jiggers <https://horseracingkills.com/issues/jiggers/>:



Disgraced trainer, Darren Weir, and a close-up of a battery-powered ‘jigger’ used to deliver an electric shock, like a taser, to painfully shock horses into running faster.



Illegal under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, according to industry insiders, jiggers are still widely used on horses in the racing industry during training regimes.

- Whips

“First conclusive evidence horses hurt by whips, whips don’t aid jockeys” – Two papers published in journal Animals lend support to a ban on whipping in horse racing. They respectively show that horses feel as much pain as humans would when whipped.

“University of Sydney veterinary pathologist and forensics researcher Dr Lydia Tong revealed that a horse’s flank skin is not only thinner, but potentially more sensitive to pain than a human’s.”

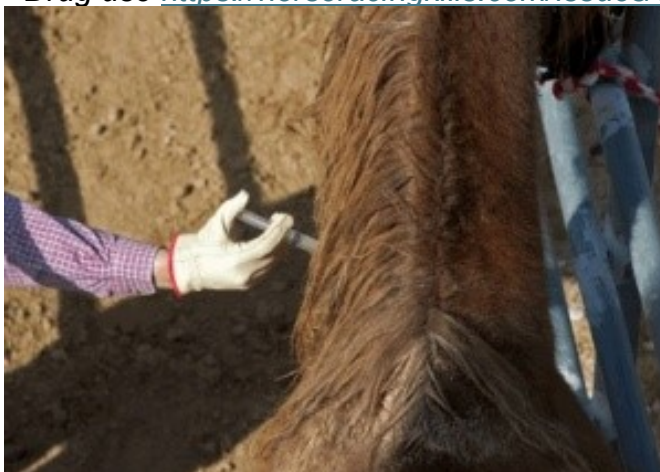
<https://animalsaustralia.org/our-work/compassionate-living/science-reveals-whips-hurt/#:~:text=The%20use%20of%20whips%20in,races%20for%20their%20human%20owners.>



One example of excessive whipping. View here:

<https://www.facebook.com/coalitionfortheProtectionofRaceHorses/videos/324903307162736/>

- Drug use <https://horseracingkills.com/issues/drug-use/>



Stimulants are used to give a horse extra temporary energy. Pain relieving drugs are used to mask pain that may result from disease or injury. Certain drugs can also be used to control pulmonary bleeding (EIPH) resulting from over-exertion in racing. Certain drugs are even used to make the horse run slower thereby manipulating the form of the horse.

- Prohibiting horses' hearing with earplugs and blocking their vision with blinkers or blindfolds.

These actions directly cause physical and psychological harm, pain, and distress to horses. Negative reinforcement, that is, the use of pain and fear of pain, is a common method to force a horse to enter the barrier and race, rather than allowing the horses agency to make their own decisions.

The forceful handling and use of restrictive or painful equipment are considered acceptable and have been normalised in the NSW racing industry. However, these handling practices do not align with good welfare according to the 2020 Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment.

Day to day cruelty

Racehorses are caused harm because of poorly informed and inadequate management practices, that are visited on horses on a day-to-day basis over their entire racing lives: housing, diet, training, racing, and breeding regimes that conflict with their biological needs. Frequent, minor acts, cause life-long suffering, poor welfare outcomes and an early death.

Health issues

<https://horseracingkills.com/issues/other-health-issues/>:

- *Bleeding of the lungs:*

483 horses were pushed so hard they bled through their nose.

Indicating horses finished a race with blood in their lungs to varying degrees on **47,817** occasions.

During the 2019/2020 racing year

www.horseracingkills.com

- *Stomach ulcers*



- Inflammatory airway disease

The accommodation in which horses are kept whilst being used to race is entirely inappropriate - they are confined to stalls for up to 23 hours per day

- <https://horseracingkills.com/issues/confinement/>

The inability to graze, combined with their feeding regime, leads to most racehorses suffering from painful stomach ulcers. Combined with their inability to socialize and move freely, many stabled racehorses will develop stereotypical behaviours such as wood chewing, box walking, windsucking and weaving to try to cope with the stress.

Conventional feeding and housing regimes within the NSW racing industry fail to accommodate the most basic, natural needs of a horse as per the 2020 Five Domains Model. This commonly results in horses behaving very differently from how they would under natural circumstances such as displaying learned helplessness or being difficult or even dangerous to handle and ride. These behaviours are nevertheless also normalised in the NSW racing industry, and cause further difficulties when the horses are retired from racing and need rehoming.

I urge the NSW Government to ensure the NSW Racing industry improves Thoroughbred welfare by introducing the Five Domains Welfare Model for all racehorses.

5. Racing related deaths and injuries

I have learned from CPR's (2023) Deathwatch report that in 2023, Australia wide, 168 Thoroughbreds died on track or shortly after as a direct result of racing, with the most common injury being a catastrophic front limb injury. New South Wales racetracks were responsible for approximately 30% of these deaths:

Just two examples:

1 Jazzy Jasper was extremely young. He died during his first race on 22 October 2022 at just one year old. It was the first race for all horses in the tragic race that day – the 2YO Colts & Geldings Maiden Plate.

Jazzy Jasper sustained injuries to both of his forelegs on the home turn and was euthanised. Footage shows both legs snapped and flapping under the gelding as he tries to stand and can't. CPR picked up voices on the replay – presumably from the stewards' room.

Those in the know are aware that horses are not allowed to be raced until the age of two years old. However, the age of the horse is decided by the 'racing calendar year', not the horses actual date of birth. Therefore, horses can and are often still just one year old when being entered into official races.

Please view here: <https://youtu.be/62DlumvI9CA> - Oct 10, 2023

2 This is what it looks like when a horse suffers a heart attack after having literally run her heart out for the sake of gambling and entertainment.



Please view here:

<https://www.facebook.com/coalitionforthe protection of racehorses/videos/1562782401003451/>

The average Australian no longer accepts the abuse of animals for human gambling and entertainment. No other 'sport' in the world would allow one of their athletes to be killed every second day as Thoroughbred racehorses are in Australia.

6. Social impact of the Racing Industry

The horseracing industry is inherently linked to the gambling industry. Studies show that 41% of those who regularly gamble on horse and dog racing, experience one or more gambling-related problems such as relationship issues, financial pressures, and health problems. Research also shows that police recorded assaults and family incidents are elevated on major horseracing event days. The NSW Government is obligated to help combat these social problems by funding various problem gambling aid initiatives.

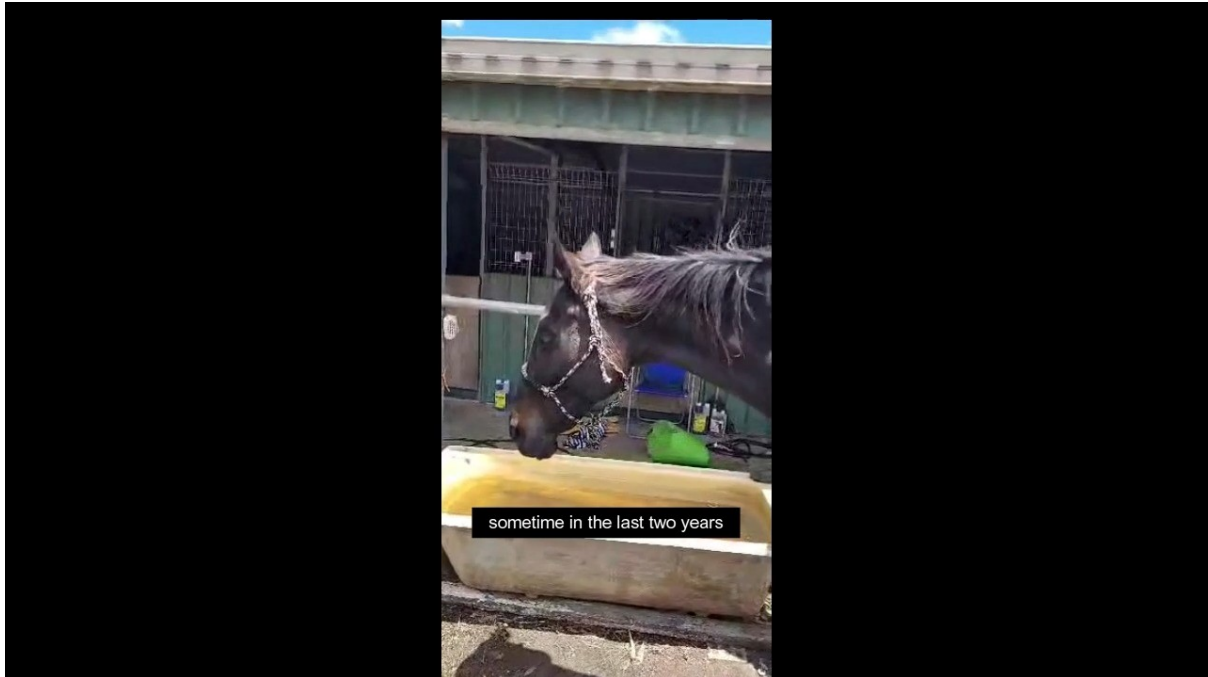
Additionally, studies report that humans who are cruel to animals are also likely to be violent towards other humans. The public display of cruelty to Thoroughbreds every race day, further encourages the normalisation of animal cruelty, and the risk of violence towards humans.

I urge the NSW Government to set conditions to prevent any of the potential sale monies from Rosehill Racecourse being spent on expanding the NSW racing industry. I am concerned this would further exacerbate these social impacts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Animals and gambling are a toxic mix. History has proven that profit driven industries will always put animal welfare second. The NSW horseracing industry is no exception.

Bred, used, discarded:



<https://www.facebook.com/coalitionforthe protectionofracehorses/videos/1505427410256128/>



An image from ABC's 7.30 program showing a horse being killed at a Queensland knackery. CREDIT:ABC

Vast and well-documented evidence of systemic animal cruelty in the 'Sport of Kings' has been ignored, accepted, and denied for decades. If the potential sale monies for the Rosehill Racecourse is in any way used to expand the NSW racing industry, the many issues described in this submission will continue, resulting in severe negative impacts on Thoroughbred welfare in the NSW racing industry.

Therefore, if the proposal to develop Rosehill Racecourse is agreed upon, I request that the NSW Government acts to impose conditions on the ATC, regarding use of the sale income.

These conditions include, that the sale monies must not be used to maintain or expand existing practices of the horseracing industry, and instead be allocated to improve the welfare of the horses in the NSW racing industry.

I would like to see the sale monies used to benefit Thoroughbred racehorses as listed below:

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Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours faithfully, Cheryl Forrest-Smith