



Health and Welfare initiatives in European Horseracing

By

The
European and Mediterranean Horseracing
Federation

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INTRODUCTION

This report has been put together in response to a call for information from the European Commission during its impact assessment into possible EU Equine Welfare legislation. Information has been submitted from national Horseracing Authorities and supplemented by further direct research.

The research deals with thoroughbred racing – ie ‘gallop’ racing, both on the flat and over jumps. Horseracing is a tightly self-regulated sector on an international scale – it is the most tightly regulated of all the equine sectors. The reasons are as follows:

- Horseracing is one of the world’s oldest sports which operates on a global level. It is inextricably linked to betting which provides the major part of its financing, in the form of prize money for the races. Hence the evolution over several hundred years of mechanisms to ensure a fair and clean sport – because the confidence of people to bet on a race depends on them perceiving that it is run fairly and honestly, with tough supervision.
- Horseracing is a highly visible and much televised sport. Its future depends upon it maintaining its integrity in terms of betting and also public support in terms of putting the health and welfare of its horses first.
- Due to a percentage of the revenue from betting coming back to the racing sector, there has been the possibility to invest a significant proportion of money into research to improve equine health and welfare.

THE EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN HORSERACING FEDERATION



The EMHF (www.euomedracing.eu) was founded to co-ordinate the promotion of Thoroughbred horseracing in the region, to bolster its prestige and protect its integrity, and to develop relations between the organisations responsible for running the sport.

The EMHF is part of the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA) which operates at a global level (www.horseracingintfed.com)

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF HORSERACING AUTHORITIES

While this document concentrates on European Racing, it is important to note that European Racing Authorities also contribute fully to international racing health and welfare initiatives, and have signed up to strict international protocols.

Recently, at the 48th Annual IFHA Conference in Paris, October 2014, the member nations of the IFHA pledged continuously to protect horse welfare and further implement strong anti-doping controls.

Protecting horse welfare remains paramount for the IFHA and collectively we must identify best practice approaches, develop global standards, and promote education and research initiatives to fulfil this fundamental responsibility as racing authorities,”

Louis Romanet, IFHA, Paris 2014

This focus on racehorse welfare is reflected in the IFHA’s committee structure. In 2010, it established a HORSE WELFARE COMMITTEE ‘to take care of this crucial subject’. Its http://www.ifhaonline.org/resources/terms_WelfareCommittee.pdf terms of reference include:

To promote best practice, harmonisation and information exchange across racing nations in all matters as they relate to the welfare of the horse, including establishing general guidance on and standards for the care and safety of horses.

To raise awareness amongst participants and third parties of horse welfare and establish permanent contact with welfare organisations.

Two further IFHA Committees have a direct relevance. In support of its mission to facilitate the international movement of horses for the purposes of both racing and breeding, the International Movements of Horses Committee has the following terms of reference:

- Follow up international health negotiations
- Propose to the relevant government departments improvements or

modifications to the existing health regulations in order to adapt them to the specific situation of racehorses

- Guarantee instant transmission of health information on disease outbreaks
- Harmonise health regulations incorporated in the Rules of Racing of the member countries of the IFHA

The Advisory Committee on Prohibited Substances and Practices comprises specialist racing veterinarians (see below) and official racing chemists, and works to advise on rules governing the control of doping and inappropriate medication of racehorses.

Within the European context, a similar role is performed by the European Horserace Scientific Liaison Committee. This body comprises the racing authorities of France, Britain, Ireland, Germany, Italy and the Nordic countries, and includes racing administrators, their Chief Veterinary Officers and analysts from the national laboratories carrying out regulatory work for each of the member countries.

THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF SPECIALIST RACING VETERINARIANS

It is also useful to note the significant international work by the International Group of Specialist Racing Veterinarians including their Welfare Guidelines for Horseracing. These guidelines provide a blueprint for the national welfare guidelines of many European Racing Authorities

<http://www.igsrv.org/files/IGSRV%20Welfare%20Guidelines%201998.pdf>

KEY FIGURES IN EUROPEAN THOROUGHBRED HORSERACING

- **28077 horse races**
- **40,000 breeders** producing around **27,000 foals** each year
- **350 Racecourses** throughout the EU
- annual economic impact of € 6 billion a year
- **35 billion euros a year in total betting activity** on horseracing
- 155,000 people directly employed by the horseracing and breeding sector

Flat races 2013 - five largest countries	
Great Britain	6396
France	4887
Italy	3094
Germany	1253
Ireland	1104

Jump races 2013 – five largest countries	
Great Britain	3750
France	2259
Ireland	1426
Italy	175
Czech Republic	158

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS/ACCORDS

All EU Racing Authorities have signed up to **The International Agreement on Breeding, Racing and Wagering** which is published by the IFHA and which brings together a series of Articles, appendices and guidelines setting out recommended best practice in significant areas of racing, stud book administration and wagering common to all jurisdictions. The Agreement is designed to assist horseracing authorities by promoting the following objectives:

- to enhance public confidence in the integrity of the sport of racing and of its breeding industry.
- **to protect the safety and welfare of horses and riders.**
- to coordinate and harmonise approaches across the world of racing and breeding to promote international competition.
- to maximise opportunities for the promotion of racing and for its financial welfare by protecting racing's intellectual property rights from piracy by non-authorized wagering operators.

All members of the Federation commit themselves to furthering those objectives and undertake to use their best endeavours wherever this is reasonably possible.

The IFHA, in its role to promote good regulation and best practices internationally across horseracing, recognises the central role played by the horse itself and so the importance of its welfare. The Federation, recognising the diversity of cultural, political and legislative and other perspectives that underpin approaches to animal welfare around the world, has therefore adopted a number of broad principles of racehorse welfare that would be implemented by the Federation's members into detailed local outputs to assure racehorse welfare :

Principles :

- Cruelty to racehorses is not tolerated by Horseracing Authorities.

*Cruelty to Racehorses is not tolerated by
Horseracing Authorities*

- Horseracing Authorities by implementing, publishing, monitoring and enforcing appropriate policies, Rules and by other activities, in so far as this is in their direct or indirect control, should assure that the participants in horseracing themselves meet their responsibilities to provide suitable care for the racehorse before, during and also after racing.

- Reasonable steps should be taken to prevent unnecessary pain and distress of racehorses by ensuring adequate care, a suitable diet, the ability to exhibit normal behaviour, appropriate housing, controlling practices and therapies used in racing and training, and by protection from injury and disease.
- In the context of these responsibilities of participants in horseracing for racehorse care it is recognised that properly conducted euthanasia can be a humane option for racehorses ; for example for individual horses with severe acute or severe chronic injuries, or where care would be inadequate, and where therefore pain and distress is likely to be the result.
- Whilst horseracing carries risks, reasonable steps should be taken to prevent avoidable risks and research ways of reducing the risks that are currently unavoidable, and to share this information between Horseracing Authorities and participants in horseracing.

These principles are backed up by specific provisions on drugs testing, reciprocation of penalties or disqualification for horses, jockeys and trainers.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION OF STAFF, TRAINERS AND JOCKEYS

THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

Training and Education in European countries of stable staff, jockeys and trainers is carried out at a national level in addition to two European Associations which seek to further develop European standards and cooperation.

The European Association of Racing Schools (EARS) was formally constituted in September 2000 following informal contact and cooperation between the professional racing schools of France, England, Ireland, and Italy. Its principal aims are to contribute towards developing the education and training of staff within the horseracing industry and to promote international cooperation between racing schools in the European Union. Its mission statement is to “promote careers within the European racing industry and to raise competency standards and skill levels of stable staff. This will be achieved by promoting the benefits of training, education and lifelong learning so as to support the work of employers and help them achieve their business objectives”.

The European Trainers Federation (ETF) comprises representatives of trainer organisations from:

Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden.

Two of the key objectives of the Federation are to exchange information between members for the benefit of European trainers and to provide a network of contacts to assist each member to develop its policy and services to member trainers.

TRAINERS

A key example of how tightly regulated the European Horseracing Sector is, is in the requirement for trainers to be licensed. The pre-training undertaken before licensing varies according to the member state.

Many Racing Authorities also undertake **random** stable inspections.

Stable inspections vary from country to country, with the **Irish** Turf Club for example naming any

(3) HORSES Check every horse on site whether or not returned in training. Identify the animal by the microchip number, check the markings in the passport, observe the condition of the horse, check for skin disease, shoes and any injury whether old or new and record same for the Turf Club injured horses data base. Notify of any alterations to be amended to any passport. Excerpt from Irish Turf Club Random Stable Inspection Guidelines

failed inspections and publishing the information in full on its own website. Disciplinary notices for trainers and Jockeys are also posted on the **British** Horseracing Authority website,

During the inspection they discovered a number of anomalies including welfare concerns regarding five horses, no evidence that the Stable Employees Bonus Scheme completed agreement was displayed in a work area and the general condition of the training establishment which was not up to an acceptable standard.....Having considered the evidence the Referrals Committee accepted the trainer's admission with regard to the various deficiencies identified. They noted that he has now taken big steps to address the issues and stressed to him the importance of current standards being maintained in relation to the wellbeing of the animals and the security and operation of the stables.

*Excerpt from Irish Turf Club Random Stable Inspection,
Sept 2014*

www.britishhorseracing.com.

Licensing of Trainers is usually under the jurisdiction of the National Racing Authority. In **France** nobody can train a racing horse without being licenced. The licence – or, for amateurs, the permit - is granted after a public enquiry and a professional or amateur course where the applicant receives all the necessary information in order to be able to manage racehorses. An examination ends the course. The training yard must be approved by France Galop (the Racing Authority of France) and, when some actions are deemed necessary, the licence is postponed until improvement has been made.

Horses in France, from birth until the end of their racing and breeding career, must be localised and their movements recorded in the Database. They must be under the care of a person declared with France Galop and may be controlled. Therefore, the whole racing career of the racehorse is controlled. For 20 years in France, training yards have been controlled by unannounced inspections by official vets. On those occasions, the yard, the fittings, the horses and the gallops are inspected. The horses' state of health and their vaccination and medication records are controlled. Samples are taken for verifying that the horses aren't medically abused. Any infringements or disorders are pointed out and must be corrected. Every year, 350 to 400 yards are controlled, representing nearly half of the horses in training in France. From these horses, more than 1000 are sampled. For 10 years, this control regime has been extended to include horses out of training and from 2015 it will further incorporate the breeding area .

By way of another example, in **Poland** a trainer would have to have completed a course of several months' practical and theoretical training from a licensed racehorse trainer and have passed an exam, including the rules of racing and practical knowledge related to the nutrition, treatment and training of horses. The entire course is under the supervision of the Polish Jockey Club (ie its Racing Authority).

JOCKEYS, AND STABLE STAFF

Jockeys are required to be licensed. In addition they are strictly controlled when they are riding in races by the stewards – who closely watch each race. Penalties can be given to jockeys and they can even be banned from racing, or be obliged to undertake retraining and reassessment.

Countries have racing schools where jockeys and stable staff can be trained, and there is increasing cooperation and interaction between European countries to improve overall the standards throughout Europe.

In **Ireland** applicants for a Professional/Apprentice Jockeys licence attend the 10 month trainee jockey course held annually at the Racing Academy Centre of Education (RACE)

Any applicant who did not attend RACE (the vast majority of applicants **do** attend) has to complete a riding assessment as part of the application process and whip tuition forms part of this assessment. The instructors particularly focus on correct and safe use of the whip in both hands/ swapping the whip from one hand to the other and displaying the combined skills required when riding a finish and the overall strength and fitness to safely ride a race. All Qualified Riders also complete a riding assessment before a licence is issued and get the same tuition.

ON THE RACECOURSE

Race meetings and race courses are subject to rules, whether this be for the jumps, the actual course surface or the requirement for officials, veterinarians, farriers and other key staff on the day.

For example in **Great Britain** there a number of detailed requirements which have to be fulfilled for a race meeting; not least there are strict minimum standards and practices for the upkeep of the racecourse, whether this be the horse boxes or the track (whether synthetic or turf) including professional qualification requirements for personnel.

At least two individuals of the Ground staff team (which includes the Clerk of the Course) must be qualified in turf management (agriculture or, preferably, amenity horticulture) to the following levels or equivalent: (i) One member of the Ground staff Team: Based on NVQ Level 3/Racecourse Ground staff Management Skills (ii) Second member of the Ground staff Team: Based on NVQ Level 2

BHA (Great Britain) Instructions

For the veterinary angle, to again take a British example, there is a requirement of a minimum of two veterinarians (three in the case of jump racing), competent vehicle crews to man the horse ambulance and recovery vehicle, and someone to oversee presenting the horses for post-race testing. Specifics for the horse boxes, qualifications of veterinary surgeons and horse ambulances and equipment are set out in detail in the annexes http://www.britishhorseracing.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/BHAGI_12.pdf

Over the last 15 years, the equine fatality rate in British Racing has fallen by one-third (from 0.3% to 0.2% of all runners)

In France the security of the racecourse is subject to constant improvement in order to avoid accidents: The racecourses have received new lists of instructions, the obstacles have been improved, the ground of the parade ring of the main racecourses has been covered with a safety material, a recovery enclosure has been built in the main jump racecourse, sprays of water and showers have been introduced for the purpose of refreshing horses. On every racecourse, at least two vets must be in attendance during the meeting. On the main racecourses of France Galop, a special vet team attends, with comprehensive equipment (including X-ray, laboratory) for emergency treatment.

RETIRED RACEHORSES

FUNDING FOR RETIREMENT AND RETRAINING OF RACEHORSES

A number of countries have specific programmes which are funded from different sources including Racing Authorities, and charities.

In **France**, a partnership between the Racing Authority and a welfare association was forged several years ago in order to organise the retirement for racehorses which cannot go to stud or to

equestrian fields. A second partnership complements the first, facilitating the retraining of racing horses into a new life.

“We are delighted to once again be involved in the growing “Racehorse to Riding Horse” sector; It is important to raise awareness of the fact that once leaving the track the thoroughbred is well adapted to go on to a second career. The versatility of the thoroughbred horse is remarkable with many retrained racehorses succeeding in a variety of disciplines.”

Elaine Hatton, Irish Thoroughbred Marketing

In **Ireland**, the industry supports initiatives for retraining as well as producing a guidance booklet for racehorse owners to promote responsible ownership. In addition, in both **Great Britain** and **Ireland** there is growing success in particular competitions open to ex-racehorses which are funded by the industry itself.

In **Great Britain**, to use a specific example, during 2013 the number of horses registered to compete in the Retraining of Racehorses Series of Competitions increased to over 4,700, up 17% on the previous year. The official charity which was set up by the British Racing sector in 2000, has recently invested £230,000 in its education and training programme to promote the adaptability of former racehorses for new careers.

DESTINATION OF RACEHORSES AFTER THEY LEAVE RACING

An investigation by Weatherbys (the Thoroughbred Stud Book Authority for Great Britain and Ireland) in **Great Britain** for the British Horseracing Authority in 2006 determined that of the 7590 horses which left training that year, 90 per cent could be determined as to their destination after racing, with the highest proportions going either into the leisure and other competition fields, or to breeding.

PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES AND DRUGS TESTING

EU Racing Authorities have signed up to internationally agreed rules from the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities. The Agreement is reviewed once a year by the IFHA Annual Conference.

IFHA's Article 6 covers Prohibited Substances, in which such substances are defined, thresholds are established for the prosecution of breaches, and instructions given for sampling principles, Racing

Authorities' sanctions, the responsibilities of trainers and race day regulations. The Article also covers Prohibited Practices and gives a code for trainers dealing with the medication of racehorses.

In **France**, for example, all the races are controlled and at least one horse is sampled in every race up to five in certain race types).

Practices which can be dangerous or detrimental for the horse are prohibited: eg neurectomy, cryotherapy, tracheotomy, racing pregnant mares after 120 days of pregnancy. Whip use is also severely controlled.

In training and out of training, France Galop's rules and especially the code of medication practice require total transparency of the medical treatments, a complete ban on anabolic steroids (in place for more than 20 years), EPO, growth hormone and blood manipulation. From 2015, controls will be extended to the breeding area.

Testing of racehorses is carried out not just on the racecourse but out of competition

"To ensure fair competition, transparency, welfare and sound breeding, Racing Authorities will at their discretion carry out testing for prohibited substances at any time in the career of any horse, from the commencement of training to final retirement from racing" Article 6E, IFHA

Key sections within Article 6 include:

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Race horses are prohibited from racing with any prohibited substance in their bodies.**
- **No race horse used for racing may be subjected to the prohibited practices specified in this article. Sick or injured race horses must be treated and/or rested as appropriate for their condition before returning to full training.**

GENERAL PROVISIONS

All therapies for a horse involved in racing or race training (including rest periods) should be based upon a specific diagnosis, administered in the context of a valid and transparent owner-trainer-veterinarian relationship, and **given in the interests of the horse's health and welfare**. Following any therapy given to a race horse, a sufficient period should elapse prior to racing such that the therapy (i) is not capable of giving the horse an advantage or causing it to be disadvantaged contrary to the horse's inherent merits or (ii) is detrimental to its welfare.

No therapies should be administered on the day of the race to a horse without the authorisation of the Horseracing Authority.

Article 6A - PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES – The overriding objective of this Article is to protect the integrity of horseracing and the welfare of the horse through controlling the use of substances

capable of giving a horse an advantage or causing it to be disadvantaged in a race, contrary to the horse's inherent merits.

SAMPLING

To establish whether a prohibited substance is present, samples shall be taken from horses declared to race. Horseracing Authorities may also take samples at any time, according to their own rules. A horse shall be disqualified whenever the analysis of an official sample taken on race day demonstrates a positive finding for a prohibited substance as defined by the relevant Rules of Racing. The trainer of the horse shall be penalised except when he has discharged his responsibilities as described hereunder beyond reproach.

Where a sample taken from a horse at any other time contains a prohibited substance, Horseracing Authorities may, according to their own rules, impose sanctions on the horse, trainer, owner, or other licensed persons.

'The Stewards have power at any time to order, by general or particular direction, an examination or test by such person or persons as they think fit of any Horse entered for a race or which has run in a race'
Irish Rules of Racing, Rule 18

With the objective of helping trainers and their veterinary advisers, Horseracing Authorities may include in their own rules examples of prohibited and non-prohibited substances.

With the objective of providing guidance to horseracing tribunals, Horseracing Authorities may produce a classification of prohibited substances.

THRESHOLDS

International thresholds can only be adopted for:

- substances endogenous to the horse
- substances arising from plants traditionally grazed or harvested as equine feed
- substances in equine feed arising from contamination during cultivation, processing or treatment, storage, or transportation.

Thresholds shall be recommended by the Federation's Advisory Council on Equine Prohibited Substances and Practices, after consultation with the Association of Official Racing Chemists and the International Group of Specialist Racing Veterinarians, and approved by the Executive Council of IFHA.

USE OF THE WHIP

European Racing Authorities have signed up to the IFHA Code, Article 11 on Use of the Whip. All Races are strictly overseen by Stewards of the Racecourse. Most European Racing Authorities have exceeded the IFHA code and jockeys who are deemed to have used excessive force are fined, possibly suspended, or sent for retraining.

This Guideline gives examples of use of the whip which are prohibited:

- Using the whip to the extent of causing injury.
- Using the whip with the arm above shoulder height.
- Using the whip with excessive force.
- Using the whip on a horse which is showing no response.
- The continued use of the whip on a horse after its chance of winning or being placed is clearly gone.
- The unnecessary use of the whip on a horse that has clearly won its race or has obtained its maximum placing.
- Using the whip on a horse which is past the winning post.
- Using the whip on the flank of the horse.
- Using the whip with excessive frequency.
- Using the whip on any part of the horse's head or in the vicinity of the head.
- The use of the whip in front of the saddle while the whip is held in the forehand position, unless exceptional circumstances prevail.

In addition, several Racing Authorities have implemented even stronger regulations; In **Germany**, only whips covered by shock absorbing material and with a maximum length including the flap of 75 cm are permitted and controlled by the clerk of the scales- the use of the whip is limited to a maximum of 5 hits during the whole race with very severe punishments for riders not following the rules i.e. jockeys must pay a minimum of 50 % of their riding percentage but not under 500 € and will, from the beginning of 2015, receive a penalty from the Stewards of at least two days' suspension. The use of the whip in 2yo races is called a "Reitklappe" with a maximum length of 40 cm.

In **Cyprus**, all licensed jockeys have a training course in order to avoid the unnecessary use of the whip and they have implemented new Rules and strictest fines when such a case occurs

In **Ireland**, if a jockey breaches the whip rules while race riding, the Stewards have the power to refer the jockey back to RACE for tuition in relation to the particular breach. The RACE instructor will have a DVD of the race and will discuss the breach with the jockey. He will then practice using the racehorse simulator until he has corrected the error. A report is sent back to the Turf Club (Ireland's regulatory horseracing authority).

EQUINE HEALTH AND RESEARCH

Equine Health and racehorse welfare is inextricably linked. One might consider it a 'selfish' obligation, as racehorses need to be in full health as well as good 'mental' condition in order to perform well and to win races.

Disease spread is taken extremely seriously as an outbreak could have disastrous consequences – not just for individual stable yards but for racecourses and even local economies.

In **France**, a hugely successful network has been set up which is called RESPE (www.respe.net) . Alerts from more than 500 French Vet sentinels, from laboratories and corresponding vet members of Europe are circulated and increase the sanitary security. All the relevant information on health, training, breeding or racing are circulated to the breeders, trainers, owners, jockeys by mailings and the website.

Each year many countries dedicate a significant portion of their revenue to equine veterinary research – the results of which benefit all the racing countries in the EU and further afield. For example, in **Great Britain**, the Horserace Betting Levy Board has, over the past 50 years, invested over 47 million pounds sterling (around 60 million euros) into veterinary equine science and education essential for the health and welfare of racehorses

CONCLUSION

We trust that the above summary of the regulatory framework set down internationally for European Horseracing Authorities, together with the many indicative examples of the rules, practices and institutions in place within Member States' racing industries, conveys the very high importance placed upon racehorse welfare by the horseracing sector.