

Submission to the Queensland Government's independent inquiry into equine welfare from Peter and Peta Gray

INTRODUCTION:

Our involvement in the thoroughbred racing industry in Queensland is as follows:-

We own and race approximately 40-50 horses at any given time in all areas of Queensland.

We also buy approximately 100-150 horses per year for rehoming, these horses would otherwise proceed to the abattoir if we didn't purchase them.

REHOMING OF THE THOROUGHBRED:

Rehoming is a very broad term, and we would like to point out the various disciplines and what criteria is applicable to each one. This is from our own experience in the past 10-15 years.

1. Movie horses – we were able to send approximately 30 T/breds to the movie, The Cup, some years ago. These horses had to match the horses that ran in the Melbourne Cup in the relevant year and were later sold to the movie company for further use.
2. Horses to race overseas – in 2017 we sent a shipment of 80 horses to race in Vietnam at a private race track east of Ho Chi Min City. These were all horses that were uncompetitive in Australia and would have been retired but were able to continue their careers in Vietnam.
3. Police horses – Thailand – We have exported a number of horses for use as Police horses in Thailand. The criteria for these horses was that they be 15.2 hands and black colour.
4. TV commercial – We have supplied a number of horses for TV commercials.
5. Equestrian discipline – a) Show jumping, two horses we sold recently competed in the final of the jump off series in Victoria. b) Eventing. c) General showing d) Polocrosse e) Polo (mainly 3-4 yo fillies) approximately 15 hands f) Stock horses g) Recipient mares (surrogate mothers for embryo transplants). We have been able to sell 40 mares each year for this activity and it is becoming more widespread in vet surgeries throughout Queensland.

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS:

Q. 1 Should welfare standards for retired horses be determined by quality of life or length of life or both.

Answer: We believe both are important but in reality from our experience it is possible to find quality of life for approximately 80-85% of horses overall after retirement. However, it is difficult with the balance as they are the ones that maybe injured, with no chance of rehabilitation, unsuitable to be paddocked (eg Windsuckers and older horses).

Q. 2 Is there still an argument for the commercial slaughter of horses if performed appropriately and humanely.

Answer: We believe there is but only for the 15-20% mentioned above. This can be easily policed by a ruling that any T/bred horse presented at an abattoir be accompanied by a certificate from a Vet, that it is unsuitable for rehoming. (If no certificate it would be sent back to the owner/supplier.

Q.3 Are you aware of any gaps in the regulatory arrangements for managing the welfare of retired racehorses.

Answer: We believe that the problem here is that once people in the racing industry have rehomed their horse it is usually to people not controlled by the racing industry regulations.

Q.4 Are you aware of any gaps in the transport standards and management of horses in the meat processing industry.

Answer: We are not aware of any issues but surely bio security and Government appointed vets can handle this issue.

Q. 5 If the inquiry were to recommend a rehoming program what elements should it possess and how should it be funded.

Answer: The funding would come from the 1% of prize money that has been announced. Other ideas would be A) sponsorship of sporting events for the retired T/bred to make them more valuable and hence more likely to be rehomed. B) incentive payments to livestock carrying companies to move horses from the difficult geographical area of northern and western Queensland to the south eastern areas where they would be more likely to be rehomed.

Q. 6 Feasibility of National horse traceability – impact on our business.

Answer: The impact on our business would be that a lot more paperwork would be required but conversely any funding received would have a positive effect in that all the rehoming that we have done over the last 10-15 years has been self-funded.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any more information on any aspects of the above comments.

Peter Gray

