

HSUS Position on Horseracing June 2015

The HSUS strongly opposes the use of race-day medications in race horses, and we are calling on Congress to pass federal anti-doping legislation, consistent with our nearly four decades of campaigning against doping in the horse racing world. We have taken contemporary horse racing to task with regard to such animal welfare problems as breeding for speed rather than soundness; overbreeding that results in dumping of horses into the slaughter pipeline; the administration of medications on race day; the use of pain masking and performance enhancing drugs; track surface safety; and indiscriminate use of the whip. We are distressed by continued inaction on the issue of race-medications, and believe that the only way to achieve reform at the national level is for some of the major stakeholders to come together and press for change.

No group has been more active in horse protection than The HSUS, and we are waging battles against horse cruelty on a number of fronts. We have been the nation's strongest campaigner against the abandonment of race horses and other equines to inhumane slaughter, and we are working to halt the practice of horse slaughter for human consumption in North America and to restrict the trade in horse meat in the European Union. We are fighting in Congress to retain the prohibition on funding for the opening of horse slaughter plants in the United States, and to pass the Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act to stop the long-distance transport and export of live horses for slaughter in other countries.

The same is true for our struggles to end the cruelty of horse soring and other mistreatment of equines throughout the world. Several years ago, our undercover investigation revealing shocking abuses to Tennessee walking horses led to the introduction of the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act in Congress. The same investigation led to an historic guilty plea by a prominent Tennessee walking horse trainer and his associates.

There is a growing national consensus that the multi-billion dollar horse racing industry needs to change. It's particularly significant that the Jockey Club and a number of other major industry organizations, trainers, track owners, and others want to see change. There is tremendous opportunity for meaningful reforms that benefit animals in need right now, and that motivates our strategic approach to this issue.

Horse racing and greyhound racing are two different industries, with the latter in rapid decline and illegal in more than 35 states. The prevalence of on-track injuries of greyhounds, and the industry's long record of failing to provide long-term care for former racing greyhounds, have turned public interest away from the enterprise, which shows no interest in changing, and led us to oppose continued operations.

All stakeholders in the horseracing debate, whether pro-racing or anti-racing, should support national standards on medications and the humane treatment of racehorses. The common area of agreement is to enact universal reforms on same day doping and to step up to the plate on aftercare. It's critical that we work with industry leaders and Congress to establish a regulatory framework that improves the welfare of racehorses now and in the future.

A good review of our recent achievements in equine protection is here:

<http://blog.humanesociety.org/wayne/2014/12/victories-for-horses-2014.html>