

Recommendations and Projects

In the welfare strategy, the Horse Welfare Board identified a number of key projects that they considered to be essential. Many of these projects support multiple outcomes and enablers.

Recognising that a large number of projects were identified, not all of which will be achievable in the short term and most of which were listed under more than one heading, the board summarise 20 key recommendations arising from this strategy, as follows.

The Horse Welfare Board wishes these recommendations and projects to be viewed and taken forward as a single complete set. Many of them are interconnected, with some being necessary precursors or dependencies of others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A: STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKING

- 1. Welfare benchmarking:** The Horse Welfare Board recommends the continued development of a system for benchmarking welfare of Thoroughbreds, working with other racing jurisdictions, equine sports and equine sectors as far as possible. This should be a scientifically grounded but practical checklist, which has the potential to be used as evidence of welfare standards in racing. To be led by the BHA as an industry-wide project, with sponsorship from the HWB to ensure this work is developed collaboratively both across and outside the industry.
- 2. Euthanasia code of practice:** We require the development and implementation of a single euthanasia code covering the whole industry, including breeding, pre-training, sales and aftercare, building on existing codes and including a clear decision tree to ensure euthanasia is used appropriately. This code should be communicated to industry and external audiences, to encourage understanding of responsible, ethical euthanasia as an important element of the welfare toolkit. To be led by the BHA and utilising appropriate expertise from e.g. the Veterinary and Ethics Committees.
- 3. Code of Ethics:** Racing to develop and communicate an ethical case for racing, including a Code of Ethics. Code of Ethics to be commissioned from the independent Ethics Committee by the HWB.
- 4. Ground and going improvement and benchmarking:** Racing to undertake a project to develop performance quality criteria and measurement for ground and going, to cover first racing, then training surfaces, with an associated education and accreditation programme. This project should also assess, with the help of predictive modelling, any safety or welfare issues linked to ground or going, in relation both to turf and artificial surfaces, and the preparation and irrigation of surfaces, making recommendations for action as appropriate. This project to be led by a subgroup of the BHA's cross-industry racecourse committee, with sponsorship and funding from the Horse Welfare Board.
- 5. Continued consideration of breeding methods:** British racing should continue to play a role internationally on the relative merits of different breeding methods, led by the TBA and BHA and helping the Horse Welfare Board to maintain its understanding of developments in this area.

B: SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

- 6. Obstacle improvement:** Continued, continuous improvement of obstacle design, visibility, layout and structure, beginning with the further development of safer hurdle design and obstacle visibility. To be led by the Horse Welfare Board Chair, working with the group already convened, including representatives from racecourses, BHA and RSPCA, working with expertise from British Eventing.

C: REVIEWS OF CURRENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

7. The BHA should conduct a consultation on the whip in 2020, as follows:

With a view, regardless of other outcomes discussed in the consultation, to reviewing penalties for breaches of the whip rules as quickly as possible and ideally by the end of October 2020, noting that the need to increase penalties is a clear, minimum recommendation of the Horse Welfare Board, with particular consideration of increased penalties for:

- **Whip action offences**, e.g. use of the whip over shoulder height, where evidence suggests that greater deterrents are required
 - **Whip modification offences**, penalties for which are felt to be inadequate
 - **Repeat/multiple offences** by the same jockey, increasing the progressive penalties applied for multiple offences
- ◇ Consultation on penalties should seek views and ideas on a range of sanctions, e.g. **fines and/or suspensions** for jockeys, and **prize money** sanctions.
- ◇ The Horse Welfare Board recognises that different views exist on the feasibility and desirability of sanctions involving disqualification of the horse but feels this question could usefully be considered and resolved through consultation. Should the BHA choose to exclude this from the consultation, it must set out clear reasons for doing so.

In that consultation, the BHA should also take the opportunity to gather views, and potentially to consider:

- **Future banning/retention of the whip for encouragement**, in order to foster a controlled, constructive and managed discussion.
- Changing the rules to place further **restrictions on use of the whip for encouragement** (e.g. reduction in number of permitted strikes, or restricting use during particular stages of a race).

The Horse Welfare Board wishes to be clear that the only explicit recommendation for immediate action on the whip relate to the need for increased penalties and for the industry to take greater control of conversations relating to the use of the whip for encouragement, initially expressing views via an open, managed consultation process.

8. **Stalls and starting review:** Racing to conduct a short review of stalls and starting, including: Assessment of risk of injury to horses from stalls starts and jumps (tape and flip) starts, to ensure risks are as low as possible. If risks are identified, causes to be ascertained and addressed. Review to include consideration of stalls loading procedures and identification of any real or perceived welfare issues, with appropriate action to be taken as necessary. This short review to be led by the BHA and RCA, but with a view to regular future reassessment, in line with new information and data, or utilising improvements made in overseas jurisdictions.
9. **Lower place prize money review:** Racing to conduct a short analysis to assess any welfare or safety issues arising from lower place prize money and to provide reassurance, or to make changes to prize money allocation if required. Led by BHA.
10. **Improved accountability in non-regulated sectors:** The Horse Welfare Board recommends that the same standards of welfare, safety and traceability are applied in non-regulated parts of racing, as the lack of regulation may compromise the welfare of Thoroughbreds, as well as creating vulnerabilities that may affect the sustainability and reputation of the regulated sport. This applies to the breeding, pre-training, sales, transportation and aftercare sectors.

At this stage, we have not formed a definite view on how this accountability is best achieved, e.g. by registration or accreditation schemes, codes of practice, or through more formal regulation. The Horse Welfare Board will consider this alongside the BHA and relevant stakeholders, conducting or commissioning a review as required.

11. **Welfare financing review:** The industry to conduct an analysis of racing's funding model for welfare, with a particular focus on the aftercare sector to ensure appropriate sustainability of the rehoming sector, developing new funding models and subsidies as required, and on opportunities in relation to research and development. This work will be scoped and commissioned appropriately by the Horse Welfare Board.

D: DATA AND RISK ANALYSIS

- 12. Establishment of cross industry data unit and programme:** Recognising the importance of robust data, racing to establish a cross-industry data unit and programme, coordinated by the BHA, with the sponsorship of the Horse Welfare Board to ensure alignment and prioritisation of data projects, with a focus on the recommendations in the remainder of this section, as follows:
- 13. Traceability:** Racing should aim for the fullest possible traceability, during the period of this strategy (2020-2024), across the lifetime of all horses bred for racing, with the initial priorities being:
- ◇ 100% data completion and traceability of racehorses' **first step away from racing**.
 - ◇ Improved understanding of **second and subsequent steps** away from racing, via improved traceability and fuller engagement with commercial rehomers, to be led by RoR.
 - ◇ Analysis and understanding of any gap between **30-day foal notification and entry into racing yards**, with actions being developed to address any welfare issues that may emerge from this analysis, to be led by BHA and TBA.
 - ◇ Addressing **gaps and accessibility challenges** in the data, working with e.g. Weatherbys and Defra.
 - ◇ Devising solutions that **remove barriers and provide incentives** to ensure fullest possible traceability.
 - ◇ **Working with others** where control is limited to minimise welfare risks, e.g.
 - Working with other equine sports and sectors on collaborative approaches
 - Working with sales houses to ensure a responsible approach to overseas sales and to restrict sales or exports where there is evidence of risk
 - Providing education and support to rehomers, as per recommendation 16 below
- 14. Predictive risk modelling:** Continued development, improvement and implementation of the predictive risk modelling approach, beginning with the Jump Racing Risk Model, led by BHA and reporting into the industry data programme. Further information and data, including that obtained via trainer and jockey engagement, and ground and going projects, to be added when available.
- 15. Medication data:** Racing to establish a project relating to the gathering and analysis of medication data and clinical records, to understand any areas of risk in relation to injuries and fatalities, to be led by the BHA, working with the NTF and BHA Veterinary Committee.

E: TRAINING AND EDUCATION

- 16. Training and CPD:** The Horse Welfare Board recommends an improved and more aligned focus on training, education and CPD programmes across the industry, to ensure best practice, with a particular onus on:
- ◇ **Breeder education** to ensure responsible breeding practices and to ensure that standards required in regulated sectors are respected and applied in the breeding sector, to be led by the TBA but with support from the wider industry.
 - ◇ **Owner education** to ensure responsible ownership, particularly in relation to owners' responsibilities to horses following the end of their racing careers.
 - ◇ **Education and support for rehomers and potential rehomers**, to be led by RoR but with support and promotion by the wider industry.
 - ◇ **CPD programmes** for trainers, to be developed by the NTF and BHA and to form part of the licence renewal process.

F: COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT AND REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

- 17. Promotion of welfare and the horse:** Racing to develop and implement an approach and plan that puts the importance of the horse at the centre of its promotional activity, using a balance of strong storytelling, strong evidence and data and which makes the ethical case. This to be led by a new senior communications role, which will work with the Horse Welfare Board, GBR, BHA and an industry communications group.

- 18. Issues management:** Racing to reconsider its issues management approach and associated messaging, to ensure this is effective in providing reassurance and building (and measuring) trust with key public and political audiences. This to be led by a new senior communications role, in line with recommendation 17 above and working particularly with the BHA.
- 19. Industry engagement:** Racing to build the capacity of the sport to engage effectively on welfare, including support for industry engagement initiatives (e.g. open days), developing and broadening capacity to engage with the public and politicians, keeping the sport informed of important welfare developments, and equipping them with communications content, materials and messaging led in line with, and with content drawn from, recommendations 17 and 18 above.
- 20. External stakeholder engagement:** Racing to step up its engagement and collaboration with other equine sports and sectors, working together on key initiatives, as well as deepening its engagement and dialogue with trusted welfare organisations and charities, with a view to improving equine welfare and promoting trust. This plan to be facilitated by the senior communications lead, working with the BHA and the Horse Welfare Board.

KEY PROJECTS

	Project name	Summary
1	Welfare benchmarking tool	A practical checklist that allows those responsible for the care of Thoroughbreds to self-assess welfare levels against a common benchmark, to drive consistency and to facilitate the sharing of best practice. Tool to be developed in collaboration with international jurisdictions and other equine sports and sectors.
2	Training and CPD	Training and education programmes to ensure that those responsible for Thoroughbred care, whether in regulated or unregulated roles, understand their responsibilities, are aware of current best practice and commit to continuous learning.
3	Education of/support for rehoming and potential rehoming	To minimise the risk of negative welfare outcomes and to ensure the sport is seen to make positive and reasonable efforts to protect horses outside its immediate control, we recommend a strong emphasis on education of those rehoming racehorses, or who are considering doing so.
4	Traceability	An industry-wide project, linked to one of our key enablers, to ensure fullest possible traceability across the lifetime of all Thoroughbreds bred for racing, from the point of 30-day foal notification onwards. To include the plugging of gaps and shortfalls in the data, communication of traceability requirements, removal of barriers to traceability and the streamlining of traceability processes.
5	Welfare funding model	Analysis to be undertaken into racing's model for funding welfare, including e.g. the development of new partnerships for innovative product and technological development, and an assessment of the funding model for aftercare to ensure sustainability of the rehoming sector.
6	Euthanasia code/policy	The development of a single euthanasia framework, building on existing codes, for use across the industry, including a clear decision tree to ensure euthanasia is used appropriately. Communication of this code to industry and external audiences, to encourage understanding of euthanasia as an important and ethical element of the welfare toolkit.
7	Review of breeding, pre-training, sales and aftercare	Consideration of those parts of the industry not currently subject to full BHA regulation, to assess potential benefits of registration schemes, codes of practice, accreditation schemes, or licensing arrangements. Balance of focus to be on rewarding and encouraging alignment and best practice with core standards.

	Project name	Summary
8	Continued consideration of breeding methods	Continuing consideration of the pros and cons of different breeding methods (e.g. natural or artificial) in the context of welfare and international considerations. The HWB to work with the TBA and the BHA to maintain understanding of developments in this area.
9	Jump Racing Risk Model (JRRM)	The further development and application of the JRRM, which will identify risk factors linked to falls, injuries and fatalities in Jump racing.
10	Racing fatalities occurring off the racecourse	The continued gathering and analysis of data of fatalities linked to racing that occur off the racecourse, to build a more complete understanding.
11	Medication data and clinical records analysis	The continued gathering, and subsequent analysis, of medication data and clinical records linked to general welfare considerations and to racing-related fatalities.
12	Rider engagement	The gathering of rider insight into falls and fatalities to build a fuller understanding of risk factors.
13	Trainer engagement	Collaboration with trainers to build understanding and share trainer expertise and best practice on training regimes that may reduce risk of racehorse injury and fatality.
14	Suitability to race	Assessment of perception-related suitability issues, to ensure research is robust, to address misperceptions and to provide evidence and information.
15	Ground/going research, development & training	Further research into ground and going to build a common framework for “what good looks like”, to apply this to racecourses and training surfaces, with the development of training programmes for participants and their staff.
16	Obstacle improvement & development	Continued, continuous improvement of obstacle design and structure, beginning with the further development of safer hurdle design and obstacle visibility.
17	Stalls & starting review	Review of stalls design, stalls loading procedures, and Jumps starting procedure, to provide reassurance that risks are low and to address negative perceptions.
18	Review of impact of prize money for lower placed horses	Consideration of any welfare link with prize money availability for lower placed horses.
19	Fixture timing & allocation	Continued assessment of fixture allocation, race conditions and race timing in relation to welfare considerations.
20	The future of the whip	Following the HWB’s recommendation to the BHA for future action on the whip, the development of any resulting consultation, implementation plans and related sub-projects.
21	Welfare Data Programme and establishment of a Welfare Data Unit	The establishment of a cross-industry data programme, with the aim of establishing an aligned data strategy and an integrated, cross-cutting data unit for racing.
22	Thoroughbred Welfare Database	The further development of the BHA-led project to create a single aligned database for the sport, integrating this across the industry, as part of the Data Unit project (project 21).
23	Communications strategy and plan	A cross-industry communications strategy and plan, to be developed by and for the sport, based on this overarching welfare strategy, with appropriate co-ordinating, senior-level leadership, and appropriate alignment with racing’s overall communications strategy.

	Project name	Summary
24	Promotional welfare communications plan	Development and execution of the promotional plan, including consideration of the requirements outlined within the Horse Welfare Board strategy.
25	Corporate communications (welfare) plan	Development and execution of the corporate communications and issues management plan, including consideration of the requirements outlined within the Horse Welfare Board strategy.
26	Code of ethics	Development and communication of a welfare-related code of ethics for the whole industry, working with the independent Ethics Committee and with stakeholders and external consultants as required.