

To whom it may concern

Re: The feasibility of a national traceability register for all horses

I am a member of the public who has been involved with horses for well over 40 years and am very concerned about the lack of traceability of horses. I would like to address the points in question in the following way.

1. The existence and adequacy of state based registers – to my knowledge the only registers are breed type registers e.g. for thoroughbreds. These registers do nothing to protect the horses in the long term. To use the example of thoroughbreds, it is a well-known fact that once their days of use are over, whether that be on the race track or as a brood mare, unacceptable numbers, that the industry refers to as wastage, end up going to slaughter either for pet food or human consumption. Once they are no longer useful their registration lapses and they become just a number with total anonymity. This is just an example of how the current registration system, or lack of, fails horses.
2. The benefits of a national register are many and include –
 - (a) Security for both horse and owner. With the current lack of traceability horses can be, and are, stolen and on sold to other unsuspecting persons or to knackeries and abattoirs because it is assumed that if a horse is in your possession then you own it which is all too often far from the case.
 - (b) If horses were registered their papers would go with them if they were sold or rehomed and transfer between the old and new owner would have to take place. All horses would have to be microchipped as the best means of identification but also have their physical appearance recorded as well. No horse could be sold either privately, at a sale or direct to a knackery or abattoir without their paperwork and transfer details completed by both parties.
 - (c) It will help slow down the indiscriminate or backyard breeding that currently takes place. You only have to look at the public sales such as those held at Echuca every second Friday to know how many people think that is acceptable to leave stallions running with mares and then send the unhandled offspring to the sales and get rewarded for their lack of responsibility by getting paid for the horses. In that situation, the horses are also more likely than not to be sold to what is known as “doggers” or “meatmen”. If horses couldn’t be sold without papers the seller’s anonymity would be gone and they may stop trying to benefit through the misery of the horses they are, or should be, responsible for.
 - (d) Knackeries and abattoirs would have to scan each animal prior to slaughter and check them off against the accompanying paperwork and also check against a register of stolen or missing horses to ensure that they have a right to slaughter that particular animal.
 - (e) In the current situation horses that are bought at public sales by “meatmen” are often in their possession for a few days before being transported long distances to an abattoir in Caboolture Qld for slaughter and their meat is then exported to Europe and Japan for human consumption. These horses are accompanied with horse vendor decs which, in my opinion, must have some degree of fraudulence. Horses killed for human consumption must be free of certain drugs including, but not limited to, Phenylbutozone which is a pain killer more commonly known as bute. Because there is currently no traceability the meatmen would have no way of knowing if they horses that they have

only just bought have this or any other drug in their system and as such could well be sending contaminated meat overseas.

3. Overseas models of tracking – I am far from an expert in this matter but the UK has a model that is worth investigating <https://www.equineregister.co.uk/home>
4. Funding, enforcement and penalties – I believe that there should be an annual registration fee per horse. The fee should be modest for people involved in pleasure pursuits but much higher for breeders. Foals should be registered by 6 months of age or when sold, whichever happens first, stallions or colts over the age of 12 months should also attract a higher fee to discourage indiscriminate breeding and anyone breeding over a certain amount of horses each year should have to have a permit. These registration costs would be put towards funding the operation. If people tried to sell horses without their registration papers there would be penalties and no horse could be advertised for sale without their microchip number. No horse could be entered into a public sale without the required paperwork.
5. Related matters – I would like to reiterate that the current system, or lack of, creates circumstances for horses that are just not right and there are no consequences for owners. A compulsory registration would protect both the horses and horse owners who are committed to doing the right thing.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.