

Dedicated to initiating positive changes in the Australian horse industry



4th April
2019

A NATIONAL HORSE REGISTRATION SYSTEM

A submission by the AUSTRALIAN EQUINE UNIFICATION SCHEME

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The AEUS supports the introduction of a NATIONAL HORSE REGISTRATION SYSTEM for the reasons outlined in this submission.

We are hopeful that the terms of reference for an Inquiry will facilitate healthy and robust discussion based on real life experiences, facts, current system modeling and first hand experience, whilst always prioritising the best possible welfare outcome for the horse as the centre of all conversations.

Our position is for a National Horse Registration System with engagement at multiple levels of government.

Figure One: Diagram of AEUS proposed National Horse Registration System

National Horse Registration System

FEDERAL AGENCY

- To oversee data management
- Federal legislation requiring all horses within Aust to be registered on the NHRS
- Federal body facilitates communication b/w states
- Privacy and confidentiality laws apply
- Report irregularities to the Federal Agency to investigate

STATE GOVERNMENT

- To enforce animal cruelty laws (POCTA)
- To oversee industries, saleyards, racetracks etc
- All breaches / activity to be recorded on the NHRS per horse

LOCAL COUNCIL

- To set registration fee
- Enforce compliance with registration bylaws
- Refer acts of animal cruelty to State
- All breaches / activity to be recorded on the NHRS per horse



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December 2018

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THE AEUS: WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The **AUSTRALIAN EQUINE UNIFICATION SCHEME (AEUS)** is a collection of volunteers and members dedicated to initiating positive changes in the Australian Horse Industry via, promoting upgrades of current poor regulations and standards to provide a better quality of life for all equines and a balanced system for all owners. Currently there is little overall enforceable regulation in the Australian horse industry apart from registered groups and some sections of the racing industry.

The AEUS is committed to creating positive change for the welfare of horses across Australia. Together with members and other groups, through the collection and processing of substantiated examples of animal cruelty towards horses, the AEUS believes we can achieve real progress in improving the welfare of all horses across Australia.

Where possible, we monitor saleyards, horse transportation, neglect cases and breaches of horse welfare codes, nationally, throughout Australia, with all evidence provided to the relevant authorities.

We currently have 101 cruelty reports on our files. These complaints are forwarded to the RSPCA for investigation as well as to the local authority of the saleyard, in most cases, the local council and other authorities.

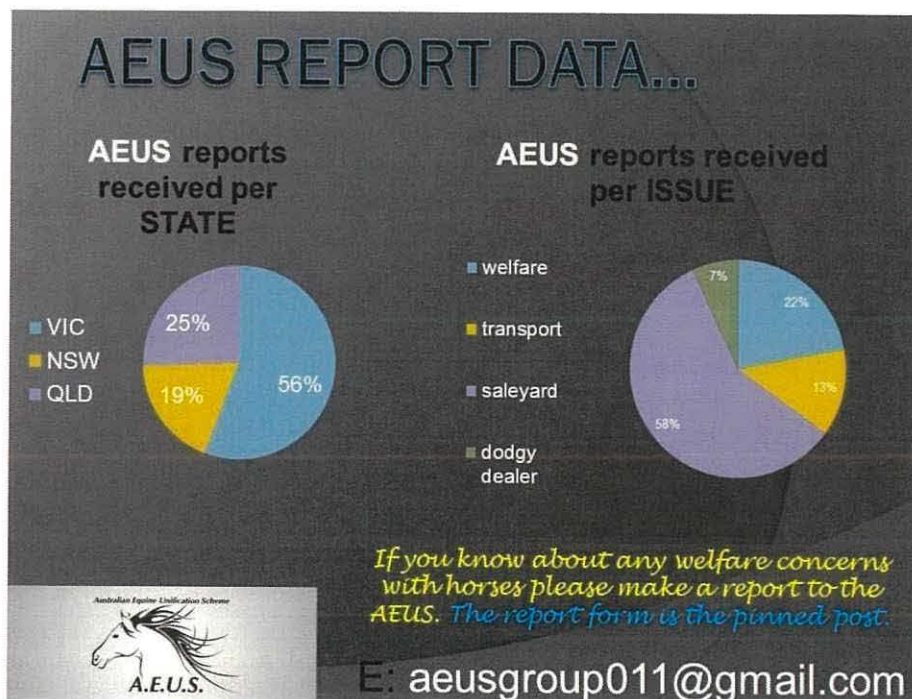
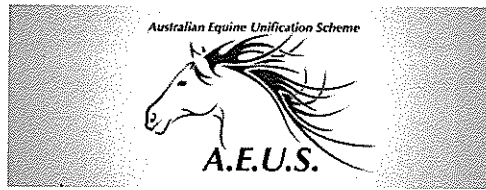


Figure Two: A summary of the information AEUS have collected through our reporting system.

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AEUS also write letters and give feedback on crucial issues which have a direct impact on the welfare of horses in Australia. The AEUS is committed to ending systemic cruelty towards horses as a result of inadequate and dysfunctional protective legislation across multiple jurisdictions in Australia.

As our people have attended and monitored neglect cases, saleyards, slaughter facilities, dealer/dogger facilities, rodeos, and horse transport, nationally over several years we have a very high understanding of the current critical amendments required for both horses and owners in the Australian horse industry.

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MAIN AREAS OF CONCERN OF THE HORSE INDUSTRY IN AUSTRALIA

UNSCRUPULOUS BACKYARD BREEDERS

Under the AEUS model, with local councils enforcing registration within their jurisdiction, this will capture the unscrupulous backyard breeders who are notorious for evading official systems. Council workers/rangers will have the authority, through existing bylaws, to enforce registration, apply fines for non compliance and monitor the number of horses on a property.

NO CONSISTENT NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE CLASSIFICATION OF HORSES

The AEUS believes for the benefit of horse owner safety, horse health, welfare, legal ownership, traceability and biosecurity issues a national, enforceable system of horse identification is required that ***ensures the traceability of each horse for life.***

The AEUS believes that a serious issues in the horse industry is the inadequate regulation of breeding practices, including the varying codes, rules and legislative classification of horses across State borders and council districts within Australia which govern the management of horses.

There is no consistent national legislative classification of horses and this presents a significant issue in terms of enforcement of animal welfare rules and codes of practice, animal cruelty legislation as well as civil remedies for people who have been defrauded across State borders due to improper conduct from the sale of horses.

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This is what happened to during transport from the saleyards.

* In transport truck with 2 loose stallions. * Trampled in the truck.
* Cracked Skull. * Likely to lose her eye. * Numerous abrasions.
* Large wounds both sides of her neck. * Flap of skin missing from her forehead. * Skin missing on every joint. * Traumatized.
* Intensive and ongoing vet care required.



FB : Australian Equine Unification Scheme

EXAMPLE TWO Inconsistent interstate

classification of horses: For horses that are transported across state lines, they pass through a number of different classifications and law enforcement options. In Victoria, the DPI investigate acts of animal cruelty to herds, in NSW, it remains with the RSPCA.

In QLD, a horse dealer purchases horse from the saleyard and transports them directly to his slaughter yard facilities, often interstate. Horses do not fall within the livestock category so are protected by livestock legislation at all times, saleyard managers are also reluctant to enforce livestock welfare standards. The example on the left hand side is typical of horses being sent to slaughter, no care is shown, and some don't survive the horrendous journey to slaughter.

BIOSECURITY RISK

The AEUS believes that a national registration system would make a significant improvement to the biosecurity risk in Australia. In 2018 C W University's Associate Professor Kirrilly Thompson and her team of co-authors published a snapshot of Australian horse care, based on an online survey. The authors say: "The lack of unique identification **poses the greatest risk in terms of traceability in the face of disease outbreaks** and for the reunion of owners with horses who have been stolen, abandoned, or lost in a natural disaster or other circumstances."

Reference: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29419326>

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A national registration system of horses would greatly improve the integrity of the trade of horses and biosecurity especially ***in relation to horsemeat contamination***. The EU audit recognised the weaknesses in Australia's horse vendor declarations.

Under European Union requirements a national traceability system is obligatory.

- All domestic horses were identified when arriving in the slaughterhouse, either on the farm of origin, at the horse trader facility or at the entrance to the slaughterhouse. The two slaughterhouses used different systems: in one case reusable numbered collars were used to identify horses at arrival at the slaughterhouse; in the other one disposable collars with serial numbers were provided to the main suppliers (horse traders). However, the identification system as currently in place does not guarantee that the validity of the HVD can be verified in the case of horses with multiple owners in the six months prior to first purchase for slaughter and therefore if the withdrawal periods had been respected.

UNWANTED HORSES FROM THE RACING INDUSTRY

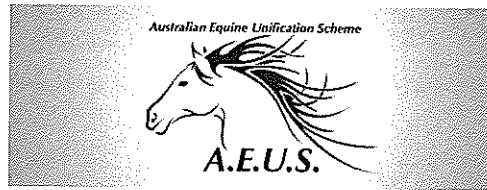
The AEUS notes that the peak national animal welfare organisation, RSPCA, has already called for a national tracing and registration system for all horses, starting with those involved in the racing industry.

Furthermore, the Australian Racing Board has identified the retirement of racehorses as a vitally important welfare issue for their industry. Due to the large percentage of thoroughbreds that were not being registered and therefore unable to be accounted for, the Australian Racing Board, announced the New Foal and Owner Registration Rules because "***traceability is the cornerstone of integrity and animal welfare***. It is simply unrealistic to think that traceability will not be required in the Thoroughbred industry."

Reference: <http://racingaustralia.horse/uploading/media-releases/New%20Foal%20and%20Owner%20Registration%20Rules.pdf>

NB: After consultation with breeders, this rule was subsequently amended from 30 days, to "within 60 days of foaling" and this time may be further extended to 120 days if a qualified veterinary surgeon certifies in writing that such extension is in the best interests of the health of the Eligible Horse.

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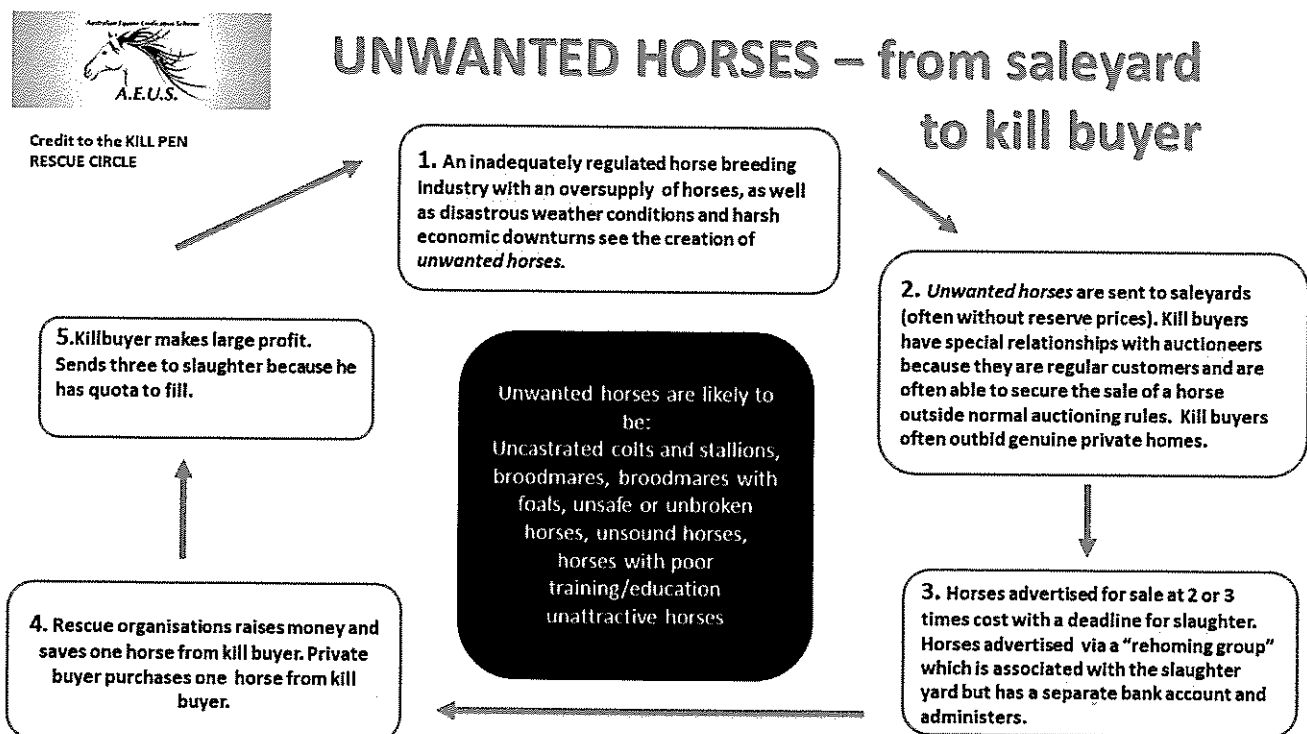


UNWANTED HORSES: FROM SALEYARD TO KILL BUYER

Another major issue in the horse industry is the sale of horses to dealers/killbuyers at saleyards who then advertise their purchases on the internet almost immediately at an escalated price. The advertisement always includes a time limit of purchase with a threat that “they will be sent to slaughter”. This creates a dilemma for the many horse rescue organisations, who consider this sale strategy as ‘emotional blackmail’ and who feel compelled to raise money to save as many horses from slaughter as possible. This industry is ***NOT regulated and protective legislative measures are NOT enforced*** and horses suffer immensely and people are defrauded of money repeatedly. There is little recourse or justice for those affected adversely.

The following demonstrates the cycle of unwanted horses, from saleyard to kill buyer, there is an incredible amount of profit made (mostly undeclared cash) while horses and humans alike are mistreated, abused and suffer mentally and financially at the hands of unscrupulous dealers.

Figure Three: Unwanted horses from saleyard to kill buyer



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ENFORCING HIGH WELFARE STANDARDS

A national horse registration system which is enforceable will act as a disincentive for people to abuse horses and breach animal cruelty laws due to significant financial fines and legal sanctions imposed. A horse who is mistreated, neglected, sold on or abandoned, can still be traced back to an owner and a penalty applied thus ensuring maximum accountability for the entirety of the horse's life.

"Above all, the neglect of any horse is lamentable, and the potential for normalising low horse welfare standards in any locale warrants vigilant approaches to research, extension, and **human behaviour for changes in horse welfare to occur.**"

Reference: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29419326>

HORSE SLAUGHTER INDUSTRY IS SECRETIVE

Horse slaughter is a secretive industry and an emotive issue because of the respect and love the majority of the Australian community has for horses. We found the lack of identification and traceability makes it impossible to accurately estimate the number of horses who are slaughtered annually each year, their age, breed and condition and the reasons why they were sent to slaughter. This lack of transparency presents a number of issues for the industry, in terms of **safety for human consumption** when horses are slaughtered for human consumption, as well as issues of **horse theft**.

The AEUS have documented stolen horses being sent to slaughter, in addition to unscrupulous people who falsely advertise long term homes for old horses, only for them to be sent to slaughter. A national horse registration system will see an immediate end to this type of unethical business model.

Horse racing is a highly visible public industry. The growing public awareness of retired racehorses going to slaughter without an effective 'safety net' in place has resulted in Racing New South Wales introducing a new ruling (LR114) stating that any NSW registered racing thoroughbred leaving racing must be rehomed and cannot be placed in an unauthorised horse sale or sent to slaughter. An unauthorised sale is any sale NOT APPROVED by Racing NSW.

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Racing NSW plan to stop thoroughbreds going to the knackers challenges secretive industry

ABC Rural By David Claughton

Posted 3 Aug 2017, 5:52pm

The thoroughbred racing industry in New South Wales has announced a ban on sending horses to the knackery where they end up as food for the greyhound industry.

Racing NSW animal welfare officer Graham Hinton said while most retiring race horses went into breeding programs or the equestrian sector, the organisation wanted to ensure none ended up at the knackery.

"We've had a rule in place for the last two years that obliges owners and trainers to submit to us a final destination for their horse, and those statistics are quite positive," he said.



PHOTO: A plan by Racing NSW ensures horses have a dignified future after retirement. (Supplied: Racing NSW)

RELATED STORY: Racism, sexism and horse meat could be on

The AEUS have documented numerous cases of horses identified as NSW registered thoroughbred racehorses advertised for sale at unapproved saleyards, often interstate. Those horses which have been retired and rehomed and are subsequently put back up for sale, are not provided any safety net. Many are transported over state lines to an Abattoir in Queensland and processed for human consumption throughout Europe.

The fate of these horses is unknown as horse slaughter facilities are not required to identify these horses nor register their fate.

Hundreds of horse-owners were shocked and angered when they learnt about the NSW race horse **Courting Magic** who had won 10 races from 55 starts, \$137,000 for her owners and an award as Shoalhaven Racehorse of the Year was bought by a kill buyer at Echuca saleyard in Victoria and then she was transported for over 17 hours to Queensland where she was slaughtered for human consumption.



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REGISTRATION OPTIONS

HORSE PASSBOOK SYSTEM OR RECORDING CARD

The AEUS suggests that all horses are registered under a nationally managed system and issued with a **passbook system or recording card** similar to the existing system in Europe, Ireland and England. Although the cost may be detrimental to an initial rollout of registration in Australia, with enough preparation and planning, we believe that this problem can be overcome.

THE RACING INDUSTRY - Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds

A large proportion of the horse industry is comprised of Thoroughbred and Standardbred racing horses. The Australian Racing Board Fact Book for 2017/18 states that in NSW alone, there are 24,227 registered thoroughbreds, comprising racehorses (10,626), broodmares (7,438), foals (5,970) and stallions (193). Presently active Thoroughbred and Standardbred racehorses are registered and microchipped by their governing bodies although with Standardbreds, microchipping does not appear to be compulsory.

Once a racehorse is recorded as ineligible to race and therefore retired, traceability ceases for that horse. The AEUS recommends that racing industries be required to introduce new rules to enforce the transfer of microchip and registration details into a national database of racehorses (as well as broodmares and stallions) on retirement.

The thoroughbred horseracing industry horse identification system includes a Thoroughbred Identity Card, a Document of Description, a Foal Identification Card and Foal Ownership Declaration.

"Thoroughbred Identification Card" means the card which bears that name and which has been issued by the Registrar of Racehorses or a recognised overseas turf authority in relation to the identity of the racehorse described thereon.

"Document of Description" means the document which bears that name and which has been issued by the Registrar of Racehorses or a recognised turf authority in relation to the identity of the racehorse described therein and shall include a Certificate of Registration issued by the Registrar of Racehorses or a recognised turf authority.

"Foal Identification Card" means the card which bears that name and which has been issued by the Australian Stud Book or a recognised turf authority in relation to the identity of the horse described thereon." [added 1.7.05]

"Foal Ownership Declaration" means the form required to be lodged by the Manager, or his or her Authorised Agent, with the Registrar within 30 days of the Mare Return lodgement. The Declaration must set out the names of each person with a Beneficial Interest in that foal from its birth to the date of the Declaration.

https://www.racingaustralia.horse/uploading/Australian_rules_of_Racing/Australian_Rules_of_Racing_07_January_2019.pdf

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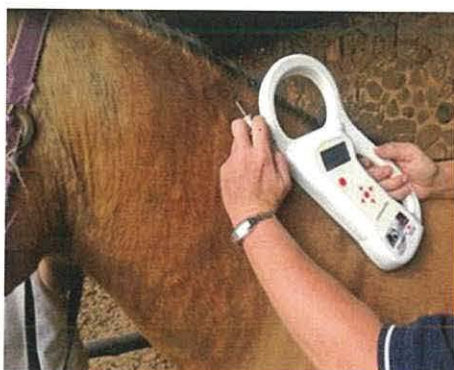
Horses that leave the thoroughbred racing industry, have a Retirement Form submitted to authorities and their status is recorded as “ineligible to race.” It does not appear to be compulsory for owners or trainers of the retired horse to hand in identification documents to authorities or transfer a horse’s identification documents to a subsequent buyer of the horse. We have noted from our investigations into saleyards, that a large majority of branded thoroughbreds and standardbreds are presented for sale without any documentary identification. The RSPCA provide important information on horses leaving the racing industry.

MICROCHIPS VERSUS BRANDING

Microchipping livestock in Australia has become low cost (often subsidised by state governments, as in Victoria), it is a requirement across most categories of livestock and as a result, saleyards and other venues are now required to have scanning facilities available. As mentioned earlier, there is no national legislative consistency about the classification of horses, however livestock welfare standards are often applied.

All veterinarians and councils will have microchipping and scanning facilities available, including mobile equipment (to travel to farms), there is an option for future private investment into this industry. Microchips have been known to move from original microchipping location although can still be found via scanner. Dealers have been known to cut microchips out rendering the horse unidentifiable, however a national horse registration system (with enforceability) will be a deterrent for this behaviour.

Branding is not a reliable identification method. Brands are easily changed, modified by unscrupulous people. The actual brand would be required to be registered, however the actual process of branding can also be a painful and traumatic experience for the horse and is the least preferred option.



EXAMPLE: Inserting a microchip and a mobile scanner.

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INCORPORATION OF A NATIONAL HORSE REGISTRATION SYSTEM

1. The registration process would require the cooperation of all Australian States and Territories, (NSW, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, ACT, South Australia and the Northern Territory), however it would be overseen by a national authority.
2. The national authority would be responsible for the storage and management of data, the States and Territories would enforce animal cruelty complaints, in particular to industries (eg saleyards, race tracks etc) and the councils would enforce compliance with local bylaws (this will catch the backyard breeder who intentionally avoids attention).
3. Registration of all horses at 30 days old, would be compulsory. Online registration would be accessible, offered in multiple languages, simple, linked to over the phone support, and include online payment options.
4. To fully enforce registration local Council involvement would be required. Local councils will enforce their existing bylaws (which will need to be amended to include the unique nature of horses), this will therefore catch all local breeders who profit from avoiding any attention or formal process.
5. Each horse would be required to be microchipped or branded and this information would be provided to the National Horse Registration Database via Council, DPI, Veterinarian or horse owner.
6. Currently, the microchipping costs per individual is quite expensive and would need to be reduced to economies of scale, however, this can be achieved through government subsidies and support by the AVA.
7. Horses currently registered with specific associations, will be required to pay an additional \$10 per horse, to include them on the national database.
8. Registration will be on a one off (minimal but appropriate) registration fee, this will also be adjusted according to the number of horses registered (eg, a rescue and rehoming organisation will not face the same fee as a commercial breeder).

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NATIONAL DATABASE MANAGEMENT

The provision of a database accessible to DPI, Council, Veterinarians and others for input and collating data. The database would be managed by a national data collection agency (either government or private industry).

Saleyards and Slaughter facilities would require access to database to check horse ownership prior to sale or slaughter. Existing legislation would need to be amended to include this requirement with an enforcement aspect. Horses slaughtered would have their deaths recorded on the database and compulsory slaughter paperwork.

Australia has very comprehensive privacy and confidentiality legislation which would influence and regulate the access to information on this database.

A National registration site for owners to register their horses with accessible online functions available.

The site would have access to translation in multiple languages as well direct access to over the phone support. For a small fee the paperwork can be completed and provided to DPI or local Council for input to database as opposed to entering the data themselves.

Veterinarians require access to database in the case of death of a horse. As do police, the RSPCA and other law enforcement bodies.

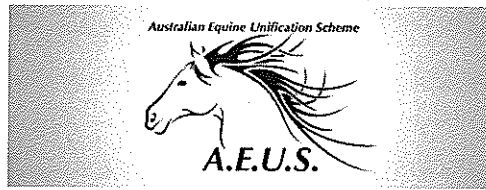
The database should include -

Date of birth/Height/Description/ Breed
Health issues/Health treatment record
Level of Training/Experience
Owners name/Owners address & contact details/Horse's address
Registration number/Date of ownership
Microchip Number
DNA testing
Date of transfer

Subsequent owners will be added below (and in accordance with privacy legislation)

COMMENCEMENT

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An online registration system (controlled by a national body) with access for people to register their horses with an identifiable brand and/or microchip. Compliant with all appropriate privacy and confidentiality legislation.

Registration paperwork may be supplied (where appropriate) to –

- Horse associations;
- Saleyards;
- Online sale sites;
- Councils;
- DPI offices;
- Veterinary practises;
- Agriculture offices

The cost to register the horse would be determined by the relevant council (with restrictions on the maximum amount). The cost to register should be reasonable but not too high that it becomes a disincentive.

Adjustments to registration costs would need to be flexible, that is a rescue and rehoming organisation would not be expected to pay the same cost as a commercial industry. Discounts and adjustments would need to be applied fairly and reasonably to rescue and rehoming organisations, as well as to pensioners and people on low income.

The AEUS promotes low cost registration fees to encourage maximum engagement with the community, we expect that financial sustainability will be achieved through fines for non-compliance and breaches of the national registration system.

ROLE OF AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY ASSOCIATION

Support by the AVA via lowering cost of supplying and installing microchips would be beneficial as would any reduction/subsidisation in veterinary castration fees.

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HORSE ASSOCIATIONS

Minimal (initial) registration fee for horses currently registered with HORSE ASSOCIATIONS which require identification and registration costs.

Associations would need to require their members to brand or microchip their horses for traceability purposes and supply microchip registration number to the database and/or authority.

Subsequent registration fees would be according to local council, but registration with the NHRS would need to be a compulsory requirement for any membership with a HORSE ASSOCIATION.

This requirement can be written into the appropriate legislation (either new or existing) which will oversee the national horse registration system.

ENFORCEMENT BY HORSE ASSOCIATIONS

Horse associations will be required to enforce member's horse registration with the National registration system, (this requirement can be enforced through legislation).

This is not difficult for associations as any horse not registered in the national Database cannot compete.

Councils would also have the authority to enforce registration as well as compliance with registration policies and procedures, these powers already exists through the companion animal act, which if horses are to be included, then it would only require an adjustment to existing legislation.

Monetary fines for advertisement of horses without registration number. Fines for any saleyard selling a horse without registration number provided on pen.

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SALE OF HORSES

The sale of ALL horses would require their registration number from national database. Any horse sold must be advertised with registration number.

Failure to provide this number, or intentionally providing a misleading or false registration number could be punishable under the NHRS federal legislation.

ENFORCEMENT BY SALEYARDS

Saleyards would be required to check ownership of horse in national database prior to sale/auction, which the AEUS can confirm a number of instances where this procedure is not being adhered to.

Saleyards would be required to have a scanner at sale and scan horses as they are admitted, most saleyards do have this technology already. Federal legislation would place the onus on the saleyard to confirm the horse received for sale is currently owned by the person offering them for sale. Any concerns or irregularities with horse ownership would then be referred to the Federal Agency to determine if a crime has been committed or if the issue is to be referred to State or Local Council.

Saleyard Associations would require to amend their regulations to incorporate the scanning and reference to database of horses accepted to sales.

(This would need to be a requirement as horses are constantly sold through saleyard auctions either stolen or without owners approval.)

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TRANSFERRING HORSE OWNERSHIP

A pink slip as per horse associations would be required to be completed by both seller and purchaser of horse. There is potential to explore the use of the passport book as well which would remain with the horse for the term of its life.

All details must be included on the national database and can be done online either by an individual or an organisation, both parties must consent to the sale and both must enter their consent online to the transaction. Transfer of ownership via provision of transfer paperwork to Council or DPI at a small cost.

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SLAUGHTER FACILITIES

Slaughter facilities would be required to check the registration details of any horse they receive, they would be required to refer any horses with irregularities in the registration to the Federal Agency to investigate.

This would then require all Dealers/Doggers/Horse traders to check horses details in the national database prior to purchase or transport to slaughter.

Dealers/Doggers/Horse traders would be required to be registered with their own horse trading number.

Any organisation not complying with the registration policies could face penalties, including (but not limited to loss of trading license, criminal charges for fraud, tax evasion or theft.

ENFORCEMENT BY SLAUGHTER FACILITIES

It would be compulsory for slaughter facilities to report any irregularities to the Federal Agency to investigate and advice on how to proceed.

Horses marked NOT for slaughter in the database must be returned to rightful owner at dealer/doggers cost. (It must be compulsory for any Dealer/Dogger/Horse trader to check horses' details in database register prior to transport to slaughter).

(The European Union require a traceability system for animals slaughtered for human consumption import throughout Europe. At this stage Australia has no efficient traceability system which contravenes European Union requirements.

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Figure Four: RSPCA what happens to racehorses when they leave the racing industry



RSPCA Australia knowledgebase / Sport, entertainment and working animals / Horse racing / What happens to horses that leave the racing industry?

What happens to horses that leave the racing industry?

Horses may leave the racing industry at any stage of their life, as foals, during training, during their racing career or when they retire. When horses leave racing prematurely, this is often described as 'wastage'. The primary reason for horses being withdrawn from racing is poor performance, with other reasons including illness, injury or behavioural problems.

The majority of racehorses will have a racing career of only 2-3 years yet their life expectancy is 25-30 years. Whatever the reason or age at which it occurs, all racehorses will eventually cease racing. There is a high level of public expectation that these horses will be appropriately cared for in their post-racing life, not least because they have been bred and used for sport and profit in a multi-billion dollar industry.

We do not know exactly what happens to these horses as there is currently no accurate or transparent lifetime traceability system for racehorses. However, a number of surveys have been conducted in recent years in an attempt to determine their fate: these have reported a range of sometimes contradictory outcomes.

We also support the mandatory collection and publication of comprehensive life cycle and injury statistics and the development of a national identification and traceability system for racehorses. In this way accurate information will be available on the experience of every racehorse from birth to death

https://kb.rspca.org.au/what-happens-to-horses-that-leave-the-racing-industry_235.html

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HORSE COMPETITION / EVENTS

Horses must be registered with the National Horse Registration System to participate in any events, including (but not limited to):

- Rodeos
- Showjumping
- Gymkanas
- Horse shows
- Dressage
- Eventing
- Polo
- Cutting

It is recommended that any event including horses must only admit horses registered with the NHRS.

PENALTIES FOR BREACH / NON-COMPLIANCE

Federal legislation will provide the template for the implementation and the enforcement of the system, together with direction and referral pathways for non-compliance and breaches of the National Horse Registration System. Penalties will need to be included in the federal legislation and may include (but not limited to):

- Financial fines (varying in low to high in value) to institutions or associations which knowingly accept a horse into their mode of business with false, misleading or no registration details.
- Financial fines to individuals who fail to comply with the horse registration system.
- Criminal charges for those who breach the registration system.
- Criminal charges under existing legislation, eg fraud, theft, contract of sale etc
- Referral to State Government if animal cruelty allegations exist.

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REGISTRATION FEES

The AEUS recommends that, as one of the major concerns is the cost of registration, the fee should be minimal as to promote maximum participation from all members of a horse breed organisation.

Registration fees would be set by the local council and comply with a pricing scale as set out in the federal legislation which has a minimum and a maximum amount to charge and registration would apply for the life of the horse. There would need to be allowances for the purpose of the registration and the organisation involved, for example a significant discount would apply to registered rescue and rehoming groups, as well as pensioners, and people on a low income.

The overbreeding/ indiscriminate/backyard breeding of horses and the reluctance of owners to pay for colts and stallions to be castrated is of great concern. It is not uncommon to witness horses sent to saleyards around Australia who are not castrated, and many of these horses are completely unhandled. A basic knowledge of horse handling and education appears to be unknown to many horse owners/breeders. National registration will be a disincentive for people to exploit horses for profit and to operate in the shadows, thus preventing an oversupply of unwanted horses.

Current horse association members should be charged a minimal amount for registration to the NHRS as they already register their horses. A microchip implant should be the main cost. The AEUS recommend that:

- Foals should be registered at 30 days of age;
- Stallions should incur a higher registration fee;
- Broodmares should incur a higher registration fee;
- Geldings and non breeding mares/stock should incur a low and affordable registration fee;
- A small fee for the transfer of horses sold.

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CONCLUSION

A National Horse Registration System is essential for a number of reasons: to maximise potential for humane treatment throughout the life of the horse; to ensure compliance and accountability with existing prevention of cruelty legislation; to ensure compliance and accountability with civil contractual law; to ensure compliance and accountability with criminal law regarding thefts and misrepresentation; as well as minimising any bio security risks posed during outbreaks of disease, or natural disasters.

Enforcement is the key component to the success of a National Registration system, without genuine enforcement options, there is no incentive for compliance, and without compliance, the system will be dysfunctional and non-operational. Enforcement through fines and corresponding legislation will ensure financial sustainability through registration fees and financial fines as penalties and a reduction in the number of horses going through the rescue system.

In order to ensure maximum participation and support for a national horse registration system, **registration costs** need to be reflective of this, a once off low fee to register would remove any barriers to participation.

A survey conducted by Australian Equine Unification Scheme in 2017 resulted in 98% of votes for horses to be incorporated into the Companion Animal Act. This is another area which the AEUS is currently researching and pursuing avenues for application within Australia.

There are also considerations regarding the **European Union's requirements for the import of horse meat** for human consumption, which is of considerable debate and speculation in Australia and internationally. A national horse registration system will ensure compliance with any requirements.

Finally, a National Horse Registration System will provide the opportunity for greater oversight, regulation and unity amongst the many existing horse groups within Australia.

We welcome any engagement and future conversation on the issue and what role we can play.

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AUSTRALIAN EQUINE UNIFICATION SCHEME

Executive team

Debbie Barber
Founder / Manager

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Report Coordinator

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