

British Horseracing Authority publishes the results of landmark Review into the use of the whip in Horseracing

The British Horseracing Authority has concluded its wide-ranging and detailed Review into the use of the whip in Horseracing, which first commenced in November 2010. The report, *Responsible Regulation: a Review of the use of the whip in Horseracing* – has been published in full and is available from the Authority's website. The Review will lead to a significant tightening of the rules and penalties relating to the use of the whip by jockeys, as well as a renewed focus on jockey training, to ensure that the best equine welfare standards are maintained throughout the sport.

The report, put together by a Review Group set up specifically for this task by the Authority, has considered the underlying principles behind the use of the whip, how it is used in Racing, and how the Authority should continue to act as a strong, effective regulator in this area. The Review Group consulted the sport's participants (National Trainers Federation, Professional Jockeys Association, Racehorse Owners Association, Amateur Jockeys Association), the Racecourse Association, the British Racing School and Northern Racing College. It also consulted with recognised animal welfare bodies - the RSPCA, SSPCA and World Horse Welfare and undertook detailed statistical analysis.

The Review considered a range of scientific evidence relating to the effects of the whip on horses, as well as the energy-absorbing design of the whip itself. The Review Group engaged a leading sports research agency, SMG/YouGov, to undertake an in-depth, independent public opinion research project and took on board the views of individuals who submitted their thoughts to the Authority.

The Review Group made 19 recommendations, all of which were approved by the Board of the British Horseracing Authority. The main recommendations are:

1. The use of the whip in Racing – providing strict controls are effectively enforced – remains appropriate and necessary for the safety of both jockeys and horses. Use of the whip to focus and concentrate a horse, and to encourage it to perform at its best, also remains appropriate providing the constraints on acceptable use set out in the Review are observed. The Review Group found that this approach is backed by current animal welfare science.
2. The current whip guidelines and penalties for those jockeys who breach the Rules on whip use are not an effective enough control and deterrent in their current form. Too many breaches of the Rules on whip use are occurring, and the Review Group believes that the Authority can better incentivise long-term behavioural change in jockeys through a wide range of recommendations with this aim in mind, including:
 - The removal of frequency guidelines and the implementation of strict and easily understood limits on whip use – 7x in Flat Racing and 8x in Jump Racing (and only five times in the last furlong/after the last obstacle). This is roughly half the amount of times a whip could be used previously before being in breach of the Rules;

- Increased entry point penalties – 5 day minimum suspension for not adhering to the frequency limits (the previous minimum penalty was a caution);
 - Forfeiture of riding fee and prize money percentage – a jockey who incurs a whip suspension of three days or more will forfeit his riding fee and percentage;
 - Increased penalties for those who breach the Rules on more than one occasion (second offence will be double that of a first offence);
 - The new Guidelines and Penalties will come into effect on Monday 10 October 2011.
3. The Authority should continue to support research into the design of the whip and incorporate any future technological innovations into British Horseracing as appropriate if it is felt that equine welfare could be enhanced.

Paul Roy, Chairman of the British Horseracing Authority, welcomed the Review and said:

“This has been an incredibly wide-ranging piece of work, resulting in a comprehensive Review that the Authority is very proud of. The Board approved every one of the recommendations and the message is loud and clear – we will continue to lead the way in responsible regulation and will make difficult decisions in the best interests of the sport and its participants.”

Jamie Stier, Director of Raceday Operations and Regulation, said:

“This has been a painstakingly thorough Review and we would like to thank all those who took part. We accepted from the outset that it would be unrealistic to think that everyone would be pleased with whatever the final outcome was, but what was clear from virtually all those consulted was that the status quo could not be retained.

“The result is a clear set of Rules and Guidelines that lay down what is acceptable use of the whip, alongside a penalty structure which will act as an appropriate deterrent. We believe this will bring about real behavioural change without any detriment to the sport, which can only be good for British Racing.”

Professor Tim Morris, Director of Equine Science and Welfare, said:

“Use of the whip is, understandably, a sensitive issue. Safeguarding the welfare of racehorses is a priority for the Authority and we are committed to ensuring and enhancing horse welfare, taking an approach backed strongly by current animal welfare science. The thoroughness of this Review, and the conclusions it reaches, are yet further demonstrations of this commitment.”

Sir Henry Cecil, ten-times Champion Flat Trainer, said:

“The BHA has done an excellent, thorough job with their Review and I welcome these changes, which will hopefully serve British Racing well.”

Paul Nicholls, Champion Jumps Trainer for the last six years, said:

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“Whilst I’ve been a critic of the Rules in the past, nobody likes seeing misuse of the whip and I agree that the time had come when something had to be done. I am pleased that the BHA has made sensible and reasonable changes, and I am supportive of them.

AP McCoy, Champion Jumps Jockey for the last 16 years and reigning BBC Sports Personality of the Year, said:

“The PJA has worked closely with the Authority on the BHA’s Review and I hope my colleagues embrace the proposed changes as being in the best interest of the sport. I for one support the changes.”

Frankie Dettori, one of the most famous jockeys in the world, said:

“I am not proud of having fallen foul of the whip Rules in the past but I have never harmed a horse. These new Rules are easy to understand which will help all jockeys ride within them. I accept these new Rules are in the best interest of our great sport and it is right that they should be in place in time for Britain’s richest ever raceday, QIPCO British Champions Day.”

Notes for Editors:

A copy of *Responsible Regulation: Review of the use of the whip in Horseracing* can be downloaded from here www.britishhorseracing.com/whip-review/

All figures relating to the public opinion research, unless otherwise stated, are from SMG/YouGov. Total sample size was 2,071 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken in July 2011. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

The full list of Recommendations is below:

Recommendation 1: Based on extensive consultation and the detailed research outlined in this report, that the use of the whip for safety and encouragement should continue, and that the term ‘correction’ is superfluous.

Recommendation 2: Under the current Rules and penalties the number of breaches of the whip Rules each year is unacceptable, and action should be taken by the Authority to achieve behavioural change amongst, and compliance by, jockeys.

Recommendation 3: Whilst current scientific evidence broadly supports the continued use of the whip in Racing – providing strict controls are enforced – further research is needed and the Authority should continue to support investigations in this field.

Recommendation 4: The Authority should continue to support research into the design of the whip and incorporate any future technological innovations into British Horseracing as appropriate if it is felt that equine welfare could be enhanced.

Recommendation 5: The Authority should widely publish the results of this Review and take other steps to try to maximise understanding of the use of the whip within Racing.

Recommendation 6: The Authority should commission future public opinion research in order to keep track of the views of the public regarding the use of the whip.

Recommendation 7: That any ambiguity within the penalty structure be removed by considering that use of the whip with the jockey's whip hand off the reins be considered as a hit regardless of how, where, or with what force the whip is used on the horse.

Recommendation 8: That the practice of issuing cautions for breaches of the whip Rules be discontinued. This is intended to bring about greater compliance with the Rules by jockeys.

Recommendation 9: That the entry point for all whip offences be increased significantly, together with increasing the additional component by which the Stewards arrive at what they believe to be the appropriate penalty for an offence.

Recommendation 10: That the current totting up procedure be discontinued for suspensions arising out of the breaches of the whip Rules, and that in its place the Stewards will consider a jockey's prior disciplinary record for whip offences within a rolling twelve month period in imposing incremental penalties for the current offence. This will lead to a jockey who is a repeat offender being referred to the Disciplinary Panel at a much earlier stage.

Recommendation 11: That the riding suspensions imposed on jockeys for breaching the whip Rules be effective on the days on which they are due to be served regardless of whether or not Group 1 or Grade 1 races are scheduled to be run.

Recommendation 12: Where a jockey is found to have contravened the Rules through their use of the whip during a race and such contravention results in a suspension of three days or more, before previous offences are taken into account, that jockey will forfeit any monies that they would otherwise have been entitled to under the Rules. This should apply not only to the jockey's share of the total prize fund, but also to the riding fee due for having ridden in the race.

Recommendation 13: In the case of the jockey being an apprentice jockey or conditional jockey whose employer is normally entitled to a share of the jockey's earnings, the employer shall also forfeit any monies payable from the jockey's earnings as they would have otherwise been entitled to under the Rules.

Recommendation 14: That a Rule be implemented to make it an offence for an owner to compensate, or instruct any other person to compensate, any jockey for any earnings forfeited as a result of breaching the whip Rules.

Recommendation 15: That the Authority should incorporate current understanding of animal welfare, behavioural and other science into jockey training to ensure whip use is acceptable and not counterproductive and also make greater use of remedial training for all jockeys, not just Amateurs, who are identified to have deficiencies in their riding, including the use of the whip.

Recommendation 16: That any Apprentice Jockey or Conditional Jockey, regardless of their experience, transferring permanently to Great Britain from an overseas Racing

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jurisdiction be required to undergo training at the Authority's approved training providers prior to being licensed by the Authority.

Recommendation 17: That any jockey who has been referred to, and found to be in breach by, the Disciplinary Panel for whip related offences on three occasions should be required to 'show cause' to the Authority as to why any application for a further licence ought be granted

Recommendation 18: That the Authority put in place a system which will enable it to identify visiting jockeys whose disciplinary record, when riding in Great Britain, is of such concern that consideration of extending the privilege to that jockey of riding in Great Britain should be withdrawn.

Recommendation 19: That the Authority, in conjunction with its accepted training providers, revisits the course content and structure delivered to Apprentice Jockeys, Conditional Jockeys, and Amateur Riders at each stage in their career to ensure proper consideration is given to providing the most effective training for jockeys in acceptable and correct use of the whip.

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