

Abstract - McManus

There will always be too many: “Overbreeding” of animals in racing industries

The number of thoroughbreds and many other racing animals born each year has declined recently due to concerns about “overbreeding”. This may prevent the birth of some animals with limited chances of winning races but it reinforces the structure of success in racing as being the basis for the breeding industries, which vary significantly depending on the rules of each animal-based industry. The structure of all animal-based racing industries is a pyramid, with many animals at the base and a few elite athletes at the apex, usually for a short period of time. There will always be too many animals bred because structurally not all of them can become champions, or “pay their way”. What happens to those animals that do not get to the track, or are unsuccessful in their racing careers? What future is there for animals that are gelded and cannot be used for breeding? Animals that have a successful racing career may struggle in the breeding industry, where the same competitive logic operates. Given the competitive structure of both the racing and breeding industries, inevitably most animals will still not be successful even when breeding numbers are reduced. Therefore, if animal-based racing industries such as thoroughbred racing are to continue then welfare initiatives such as the holistic education of young horses prior to racing, appropriate care during their racing careers and industry-funded off the track programs to enable horses to enjoy a longer life should be prioritised.

Prof Phil McManus

Professor in Urban and Environmental Geography
University of Sydney

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