End of life and euthanasia

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Overview

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1. Introduction

What is World Horse Welfare?

- Leading charity for 90 years
- Covers full spectrum of horse world
- Works across 5 continents
- Approach based on experience and evidence

Helps through education, campaigns and hands-on care

Supports responsible use of horses in sport
Advisor to sport regulators

- British Horseracing Authority (BHA)
- The FEI and so National Federations
- Member of the British Equestrian Federation and the European Horse Network
Supporting horse racing

- Member of the BHA’s welfare sub-committee
- Seek to provide a constructive voice
- Involved in 2011 review of the whip and Grand National
Working with the FEI

• Advising the FEI for more than 30 years

• Welfare Code of Conduct – drafted with World Horse Welfare

“All those involved in international equestrian sport must adhere to the FEI Code of Conduct ... and acknowledge and accept that at all times the welfare of the horse must be paramount ... and never be subordinated to competitive or commercial influences.”
2. Responsible ownership

• From birth to death
• Responsible breeding
• Responsible care
• Good, timely end of life

‘Unwanted’ horses pose significant welfare problems
“Delayed death is one of four priority welfare concerns in UK.”

- Horses in our Hands, University of Bristol 2016, research funded by World Horse Welfare
3. Spectrum of options

Never euthanase (euthanize)

+ More ethical?
+ Focus on 2\textsuperscript{nd} careers
- Loss of £€ value
- May spiral into neglect
- Ultimately negative PR

Euthanase all

+ Taking responsibility?
+ Confidence none fall into neglect
- Negative PR
- ‘Easy’ option
- Ethically unacceptable
Slaughter

• Humane horse slaughter an outlet for ‘unwanted’ horses

• Slaughter close to source – transport can cause immense suffering

• Barriers to slaughter
4. Factors to consider

• Can I guarantee a good home for the horse?
• Are they suitable for a 2\textsuperscript{nd} career/role?
• What is/will be their quality of life?
Quality of life questions

• Are they in pain?
• Will they thrive away from racing?
• Do they still enjoy doing what they used to?
• Just in Case
Quality not quantity

Together, we need to be a strong voice to state unequivocally that an animal’s quality of life has to be **THE primary driver** for making decisions around euthanasia.
5. Barriers to euthanasia

- Availability
- Costs
- Religious or cultural beliefs
- Attitudes
Availability of euthanasia

Euthanasia allowed for any reason
Euthanasia only on vet. advice
Unknown
Drugs and Costs

• Drugs may not be not available in many countries

• Vet fees, carcase disposal can cost more than horse is worth financially

• In Europe, less availability of low-cost options
Religious or cultural beliefs

• Euthanasia uncommon in Animistic or pacifist cultures

• Africa, Nepal, India – horses left to roam until eaten by predators

• Where no predators, this option is cruel as horse dies slowly
Attitudes

• Reluctance to address poor health or make decision
• Peer pressure, PR
• Easier to ignore, or pass problem onto new owner
6. When it goes wrong
...it can be uncomfortably close to home
But so often it can and does go right...
Take home messages

• Humane slaughter play a key role
• Euthanasia hould never be seen as the easy option
• Quality of life is the crucial consideration
• We have to challenge
  – National Laws
  – Attitudes
  – Cultural and religious beliefs
• And above all be responsible owners – and be seen to be doing just that
Thank you for listening

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