



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

13th October 2023

Dear Conithent,

RE: RACEHORSE WELFARE

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about the welfare of racehorses. I have read your comments with interest.

The Government is committed to the highest standards of animal welfare, including for racehorses, as demonstrated through our ambitious 'Action Plan for Animal Welfare'.

I welcomed the creation of the racing industry's Horse Welfare Board, which was formed in March 2019. The board is chaired by Barry Johnson, former President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and includes members from across the racing industry, veterinarians and animal health and welfare experts. The board has assured the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that it is committed to doing all it can to make the sport safer and improve welfare outcomes. I particularly welcome their strategy, 'A Life Well Lived', which sets out a strategic plan to improve the welfare and traceability of racing horses before, during, and after their racing career. The board has subsequently produced 'Euthanasia Guidelines' and published an 'Aftercare Funding Review', which recommends a strategic approach to aftercare in Britain, covering any horse bred for racing.


I understand that slaughter in an approved abattoir is a humane option for some horses, provided the horse is fit to transport and the journey time is not excessive, especially where a horse owner cannot afford euthanasia of their horse by a vet. Legislation sets out strict requirements to protect the welfare of horses when slaughtered and official veterinarians of the Food Standards Agency are present in all approved slaughterhouses to monitor and enforce animal welfare requirements.

To promote responsible ownership, there is clear guidance available to educate and remind horse owners of their responsibilities to provide for the welfare needs of their animal. The statutory 'Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and their Hybrids' makes clear that you should consider buying or rehoming a youngster before taking the decision to breed. The foal's individual future must also be considered before breeding from an equine, and the code highlights the UK's overpopulation problem at the time of publication.

There are currently no plans to introduce statutory licensing in relation to the activity of horse breeding. Many other approaches already address the issue of overbreeding. It is also unclear how any national limit on equine births would be implemented and enforced in practice, without introducing significant regulatory burdens. The key issue at stake is how well equines are cared for after they have been born, and existing protections already address this. The Government continues to engage closely with key stakeholders in the equine sector and is monitoring the situation regarding the supply of foals.



Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,


**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**