



USE OF THE WHIP IN HORSERACING

Introduction

The British Horseracing Authority regulates, promotes and represents the sport of horseracing. The Authority manages the fixture list; sets, promotes and enforces standards through education, Rules and disciplinary processes; represents the views of racing stakeholders; and seeks to ensure racing is clean and fair. The safety and welfare of horse and rider is a priority.

Racing is one of the country's major sports, and a significant contributor to the economy and heritage of Britain. About 6 million people attend just over 1,500 race meetings in a year. There are over 15,000 racehorses in training, and 50,000 people have an individual or group ownership of racehorses.

The Issue

The Authority recognises the range of opinions and perceptions on the use of a whip by jockeys, both amongst racing's participants and more widely, as part of our responsibility for the welfare of horses and sustaining the reputation of racing for the long term.

It is the policy of the Authority, as set out in the Rules of Racing, that a jockey is required to carry a whip and that its use is optional. Any whip use is subject to the overarching policy that jockeys must use a whip responsibly, and must not at any time abuse a horse through unacceptable use of a whip.

Acceptable Use

The Rules reflect the policy of the Authority that the whip can be used in racing only for safety, correction and encouragement – anything else is unacceptable as far as the sport is concerned. Breaking the Rules, in the use of the whip as in other areas, is a breach of the sport's agreed standards and is unfair to other participants and those who enjoy attending or watching racing.

Use for 'safety' would include using the whip to assist in avoiding a dangerous situation. Use for 'correction' is similar and would include swinging as well using the whip to keep a horse running straight. The use of the whip for 'encouragement' is permitted only on the basis of: showing the horse the whip and giving it time to respond; using the whip in the backhand position for a reminder; having used the whip, giving the horse a chance to respond before using it again; keeping both hands on the reins when using the whip down the shoulder in the backhand position; using the whip in rhythm with the horse's stride and close to its side. Whips should only be used on the quarters with the whip in either the backhand or forehand position or down the shoulder with the whip in the backhand position.

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Unacceptable Use

Abuse of the whip is use outside the use above and would include: hitting horses to the extent of causing injury; use with the whip arm above shoulder height; use rapidly without regard to the horse's stride; use with excessive force or frequency; use without giving the horse time to respond, use when the horse is showing no response, out of contention, clearly winning, or when past the winning post.

Whip Specification

The whip used by a jockey must meet a specification laid down by the Authority. This specification has been set in consultation with animal welfare groups.

The Authority's Standards for Use of the Whip

- The Stewards enforce the Rules on behalf of the Authority at the racecourse. The Rules state that the sport 'will not tolerate abuse of the horse and consider its welfare, and the safety of the rider to be paramount.' Stewards are trained to ensure consistency, and apply the Rules fairly and with good judgment.
- The Authority's Veterinary Officers, who are experienced Veterinary Surgeons, attend every race meeting and have oversight of horse welfare.
- Veterinary Officers check the horses as they return from the course. If a horse is found to show any sign of misuse of the whip the jockey will face an enquiry and may be suspended.
- We educate to improve the standard of riding at all levels and encourage responsible use of the whip from the very beginning of a rider's career.

Showing our Commitment

- The Authority regularly consults with animal welfare organisations, such as the RSPCA and the ILPH, on relevant animal welfare issues including the use of the whip and meets them formally once a year.
- The RSPCA has an open licence to attend all race meetings.
- The number of whip offences dealt with by Stewards is published annually.
- The results of the Authority's disciplinary hearings are made public.
- All Rules and their penalties, including those relating to whip abuse, are reviewed annually, and will be changed if required to improve compliance or respond to new knowledge in animal welfare science.

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