



THE CONTROVERSIAL WORLD OF THOROUGHBRED HORSE RACING

The increasingly controversial world of Thoroughbred horse racing has suffered some serious blows in past months. First, in March, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals released its findings from an undercover investigation into the treatment of racehorses conducted in 2013 at Churchill Downs and Saratoga Raceway. The public was made aware of the misery and pain these young horses experience as they race with their excruciating lameness, masked by a complex cocktail of any of 180 drugs that have been found in their systems to hide injuries and enhance performance. NYSHA's Dr. Holly Cheever was one of the equine veterinarians whose analysis of the video-graphed evidence was solicited to support the cruelty charges brought against the highly acclaimed and award-winning trainer, Steve Asmussen. Not only was it clear in the undercover footage that the young horse Nehro was crippled by his injuries and should be rested and not raced, but also the contemptuous dislike of this poor colt revealed by his trainers, grooms, and handlers showed that they felt no empathy for his suffering, and in fact, found the use of electric shocks to produce bursts of speed highly amusing. Nehro died a few weeks later of a dramatic and excruciating case of colic -- dead at the age of three, an adolescent who knew only pain during his brief career.

In the nick of time, the excitement over California Chrome's chances to be the first Triple Crown winner in 36 years received a major share of welcome media attention: a new champion



would be sure to restore some glory to this beleaguered sport. California Chrome won the first 2 races -- the Kentucky Derby in Louisville and the Preakness Stakes in Baltimore -- giving the racing world something to hope for after its long drought with no champions. However, in the Belmont Stakes in Elmont, NY, the star only achieved a disappointing tie for fourth, despite the thrashing he received from his jockey's whip as he galloped to the finish line. He sustained a superficial injury (a cut on the heel of his right front leg) but in his owner's heated post-race diatribe, the horse's "failure" was blamed on his having run and overworked himself in the previous two races, while this year's Belmont Stakes winner had not. In fact, California Chrome faced the same challenge that every one of the previous Triple Crown winners had faced, and Steve Coburn's bitter and unsportsmanlike reaction was one more embarrassment for horseracing.

The lack of a winner for 36 years is very significant, underscoring many of the concerns about the changing standards for Thoroughbred breeding, the industry's drug use, and current training protocols. Note in the chart at the end of this article how many winners there have been from the Triple Crown's inception in 1919 to the last winner in 1978: one winner in the teens, three winners in the 30's, four winners in the '40's, and three winners in the 70's with none since. How can this impressive athletic achievement have been so possible in the past and so unattainable now? The answer lies in the changing philosophy of Thoroughbred breeding, driven by American greed and hunger for new records. In past decades, all horse breeds were developed to promote soundness, durability, and longevity as primary goals, and Thoroughbred breeding was no different. Even as recently as the 1980's, the famous gelding John Henry raced through his ninth year -- unheard of today -- and was still a major winner in his last season. He lived to the ripe old age of 32, having won over \$6,500,000 for his owners and with a long list of Thoroughbred racing's most prestigious awards to his credit.

Today Thoroughbreds never race to such an advanced age. The track breakdowns that are so common today -- over

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The school year has come to a close, and as a teacher, there is now time to reflect on what children are really learning. Sadly, it rarely involves humane education.

Unfortunately, that transfers to the real world. It is astonishing to realize how many people do not see through the "glamorous" facade of horse racing and continue to support what is incredible animal abuse, yet are enraged when dogs or cats are involved in cruelty situations. How can we make them more aware?

In addition to all our other activities, NYSHA is focused on equine education. Board members recently attended the Equine Summit where a coalition of nationally known equine advocates spoke. We have supported and facilitated horse and donkey rescues both as an organization and as individuals. One of our Board members, Patrick Battuello, writes a blog for the Times Union newspaper in Albany entitled "Horse Racing Wrongs," in which he heartbreakingly reports on the daily tragedies at race tracks across the country. Our billboard, approaching the Capitol in Albany, about horse slaughter is seen daily by thousands.

When I personally speak to people about these issues, or when friends or Boy Scout troops visit my rescued donkeys, and I explain that they could easily have become burgers in another country, they are astounded and sickened. Next year I am hoping to do a school-wide project to sponsor a rescued horse at a local equine facility.

Once anyone with a heart or a conscience becomes aware of the massive and system-wide cruelty in the horse breeding industry, for racing or commercial purposes, it is impossible to turn away and do nothing.

As Patrick said in his blog, "The Sport of Kings is a well-crafted illusion of the grandest order: In no other sport are the athletes condemned to a life as chattel, mere things to be used, abused, and trashed whenever and however an owner decides. In no other sport is a whip the primary means of motivation. In no other sport are deaths on the playing field routine. In no other sport are the "retired" shackled, slashed, exsanguinated, butchered, and sold for meat. In the end, horseracing is exploitation of a weaker species for the most shameful of reasons, \$2 bets. ... Enough already."

Please take the pledge on our website – nyshumane.org -- to not support horse racing in any form and whenever you have the opportunity, let others know the truth.

As always, for the animals,

Laura-Ann Cammisa

NYSHA's Calendar

Investigating Animal Cruelty Workshops - Please check our website – nyshumane.org – for further information about our October workshop in Columbia County.

Veg Fest – Visit our table at this event on November 15 at the Polish Community Center in Albany.

For additional NYSHA news and activities, please visit our Facebook Page – **New York State Humane Association (NYSHA)**. There is also a link to Facebook from our website. We do hope you will "Like" us.

nyshumane.org

We recommend...

The Fancy Hat Veneer

Everything horse racing fans should know about Thoroughbreds, racing, and breeding. It takes you behind the scenes to the world the racing public never has the opportunity to see and most certainly never hears about .

A new book by J. R. Anderson

Purchase at www.thefancyhatveneer.com

Matching Grants

Have you checked to see if your workplace matches employee's donations to qualified organizations? If not sure, please ask your employer. You may be able to double your donation to NYSHA.

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ON THE ROAD WITH NYSHA WORKSHOPS

In 2014, NYSHA has traveled around the eastern part of the state, producing full-day workshops in Nassau and Orange counties and mini-workshops in Oneida County, Columbia County, and Clinton County. A busy year for sure!

Senior ADA Jed Painter addressed the large crowd at the Nassau workshop, co-sponsored by the Nassau County DA's Office, Nassau County Police Department, and Division of Criminal Justice Services. Painter heads up the unit at the DA's office that is dedicated to animal crimes, and he works with NYSHA on legislation that would move the animal cruelty laws from Agriculture & Markets to the Penal Code. He and DA Kathleen Rice are committed to vigorously prosecuting animal cruelty in Nassau County.

Both Sheriff Carl DuBois and County Executive Steven Neuhaus welcomed the attendees at the Orange County workshop. Both men emphasized their support of animal cruelty investigations in the county. Senior ADA Andy Kass, who did a presentation on how the county wanted cases handled, encouraged attendees to contact him with any

questions they might have when working a case. There was a full house, and NYSHA was pleased to see two MPs from West Point in attendance.



Instructors NYSP Inv. George Bird and Dr. Harold Hovel with Sgt. David Ayers (Orange Co. Sheriff's Dept.) and two West Point MPs who attended workshop.



Presenter, Nassau ADA Jed Painter, attendee Inv. James Carroll, and NYSHA speakers Holly Cheever, DVM, and NYSP Inv. George Bird

Though the larger workshops were rewarding, so were the smaller ones. Last year, Sue McDonough had been asked to present on animal cruelty investigations to the annual meeting of the NYS Horse Council. That talk spawned an invitation to speak on horse cruelty investigation at a yearly equine conference held at the Miner Institute in Clinton County. Conference attendees included stable owners, horse breeders, and horse owners, all of whom were eager to learn how they could help with these cases.

In late spring, Little Brook Farm in Columbia County hosted a conference dedicated to instructing police on how to deal with equine cruelty cases. NYSHA was asked to present on investigating horse cruelty, after which police were invited to learn how to handle

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2014 LEGISLATION UPDATE

Unfortunately, the 2014 legislative session in New York State was not the most productive for animals. With a few exceptions, there were no major "wins" for animals this year.

A few animal-related bills did pass, such as S7890/A10143 that will ban the sale and distribution of ivory and rhinoceros horns. The demand for ivory and horns is literally driving some animal populations to extinction. This important measure will help protect elephants and rhinoceros from brutal poaching and ensure that they once again thrive in the wild.

Both houses also passed a bill to protect the mute swan in New York State. The Department of Environmental Conservation had issued a "management plan" in an effort to control this species. However, the plan actually called for the "elimination of the free-ranging mute swans from New York by 2025." Bill A8790A/S6589A will halt this plan and help to protect mute swans from planned extinction in New York State.

The legislature also passed bill S6769C/A739D to prohibit companion animal piercing and tattooing. It is truly unfortu-

nate that a bill like this is even needed; however, it is in direct response to cases of dogs and cats being subjected to these painful and inhumane cosmetic procedures.

As significant as what passed, is what once again did not. There were important bills introduced by both houses that failed to even make it to a legislative committee agenda.

One such bill is A3905/S4615 that would have banned the slaughter of horses for human consumption. Horses are an iconic part of our history and continue to be our companions, as well as used in agricultural, recreational, sporting and many other industries and activities. Americans do not eat horses or raise them as a source of food. However, every year, thousands of them are transported through New York State to Canadian slaughter plants to supply foreign markets with horsemeat. Some other states have banned the slaughter of horses for human consumption, and there are national polls indicating that over 80 percent of Americans oppose slaughtering horses

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horses if they had to help remove them during the execution of a search warrant. A large number of police attended, including sheriff's deputies and state police investigators and troopers. All reported that the training was much needed and appreciated.

The spring sessions were topped off by a request by Senator Griffo from the Oneida County area to have NYSHA participate in a workshop for area law enforcement officers on animal cruelty investigation. Sue McDonough advised the attendees on how best to investigate such cases, and ADA Stacey Paolozzi spoke about the guidelines of the DA's Office when working cases. ADA Paolozzi has assisted NYSHA as a presenter in our past workshops in Oneida County.

It has been a full and productive year thus far, and we are looking forward to the fall workshop in Columbia County, scheduled for October 7.



NYSHA's Pat Valusek (left), with several police attendees, Little Brook Farm's Director Lynn Cross (middle) and presenter, Det. Michelle Crowley (right) from Colonie Police Dept.

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1,200 per year -- were infrequent events in the past. Part of the blame for these statistics, which are far worse than occur internationally, can be attributed to the fast and unyielding surfaces of American tracks. As stated, Americans clamor for record-breaking performances, and those do not occur on the more forgiving turf surfaces seen in other countries. In addition, the changing aim of Thoroughbred breeding, favoring the more fragile but faster genetic lines, has inevitably driven the breakdown statistics to greater heights. There are far too many stresses inflicted on the present-day equine's developing bones and ligaments, with too little chance for injury repair. Add to that the spiraling drug misuse that was only a minor element of horse racing in the early to mid-20th century, and you create a dangerous sport for horse and jockey, in which injured animals on performance-enhancing chemicals are forced to compete when medical advice would have them rested for weeks to months. Starting their rigorous training so young only adds to the damage and stress that their immature frames endure.

NYSHA encourages its members and the public annually to boycott our local Saratoga racing season, and to educate co-

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for human consumption. Yet, for multiple years the New York State Legislature has failed to act on this critical bill.

The news is cluttered with stories of animal cruelty, neglect, and abuse. NYSHA answers calls and emails regarding such cases every day. Animals are being brutalized with little or no action. Cases are not prosecuted, or when they are, there are very minor penalties being imposed. This is not due to lack of interest. Often these stories generate the greatest public outrage. Yet once again, we have failed to act on a measure that would ensure better protections for animals here in New York -- moving the animal cruelty statues out of Agriculture and Markets Law and placing them more appropriately in the Penal Code (A775B/S6643). Why is this so important? Currently there is very limited law enforcement or prosecutorial training regarding these laws. This lack of understanding of the current statues continuously leads to a failed response on behalf animals. Animal cruelty is a crime, often perpetrated by dangerous people. We have known about the link between animal crimes and crimes against people for many years. These are cases that impact our loved ones, our families and our communities. It is time that New York State puts these offenses on par with other crimes and ensures that these cases receive appropriate response, investigation, and prosecution.

Next year, NYSHA will once again be committed to working on these and other issues of the greatest impact to animals here in New York State. As a concerned citizen, we encourage you to be part of the process. Know the issues, find out who your state representatives are and let your voice be heard. Now is time for New York State to put critical measures in place that will be the most effective in protecting animals and improving the lives of people who care for them.

workers and friends to do the same. In addition, we will continue to advise legislators on bills pertaining to animal cruelty issues; since the two-year legislative session has ended, we will be informing you next session of new or reintroduced bills to support or oppose in regard to Thoroughbred racing, as we strive for a law that will ban both horse slaughter in New York state and horse transportation through our state to slaughter beyond our borders. We thank you all for contacting your legislators on these important issues.

For a comprehensive look at the reality of horse racing, we urge you to read Joyce Anderson's book, "The Fancy Hat Veneer."

Year	Horse
1919	Sir Barton
1930	Gallant Fox
1935	Omaha
1937	War Admiral
1941	Whirlaway
1943	Count Fleet
1946	Assault
1948	Citation
1973	Secretariat
1977	Seattle Slew
1978	Affirmed