



Giles Thompson, CEO
Racing Victoria

16 December 2019

Dear Mr Thompson,

I hope this finds you well. I'm writing to you from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) to urge Racing Victoria to ban the use of whips in all forms of horse racing. This letter comes following the emergence of photographs that clearly show post-race whip welts visible on Vow And Declare's hindquarters at the conclusion of this year's Melbourne Cup – even though jockey Craig Williams was found not to have breached whip rules.

The marks – which a veterinary pathologist has confirmed were most likely caused by trauma – prove that padded whips do, in fact, hurt horses and that even when they're used within permissible margins, they can cause damage to the animals' delicate skin. Such welts indicate the swelling of inflamed tissue, a painful affliction for an animal whose epidermis is thinner than that of a human, making their sensitive nerve endings more vulnerable to external stimuli, such as the sharp sting of a whip.

Riders whip animals for one reason alone: to push them to run harder and faster – which not only can lead to the catastrophic breakdowns seen all too often on Australian racetracks but also has proved ineffective. A 2011 University of Sydney study found that whipping a horse does not increase the chance of winning, and 98% of horses were whipped without altering the outcome of a race.

Three-quarters of the Australian population agree that the use of whips in horse racing should be banned. All other measures to limit the damage they do have failed: 2019 Melbourne Cup runner-up Michael Walker was fined this year for over-whipping during the race, despite being one of 24 jockeys who reportedly received a stern warning about whip use just hours before the race. This caution followed news that six jockeys had faced penalties concerning the use of whips at the 2018 event. Now, the marks clearly visible on Vow And Declare's delicate skin confirm what those concerned with animal welfare have said for decades: padded whips still hurt.

The slew of scandals and cruelty investigations involving the horse-racing industry in 2019 prompted assurances from Racing Victoria that horse welfare should be paramount. In October, Chair Brian Kruger said, "Victoria's vision is to be a leader in equine welfare practices." He added, "[I]t is clear we need to step up and do more."

The time to do more is now, and the way to do it is by enacting what you have conceded is "inevitable" – a ban on the use of whips.

We look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Emily Rice
PETA Australia

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

Australia

PO Box 20308
World Square
Sydney NSW 2002

08 8556 5828
PETA.org.au

Affiliates

- PETA US
- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (UK)