

Submission from Doug Paton

The whip as a human instrument is no different than a gating pole, booted kick, gating strap, shaking the lines, long stick, stones, snow balls, hose or water gun, broom, file, slapping a folded program, or an electric prod. It is used to surprise by noise creation and/or pain to create an instant response or bad behaviour modifier for animals such as cows, horses, dogs, or sometime children. There are laws against child punishment world-wide. There are, in fact, negative sanctions against any type of anti-social behaviour in all societies.

In 30 years as an owner, trainer and breeder of seven trotters and pacers; my horses always ended up training me.....and as I am regrettably a rather slow learner, it has cost me money which in hindsight I have not missed.

What I have learned is that only once or twice will an animal respond positively to punishment of any kind. If they don't respond to your voice tone, hand or arm movement or other noises of punishment or encouragement in a manner you want; then you have lost the respect and therefore the desired behavioural responses from that horse.

I have witnessed too many incidents of our horses not responding, slowing down, or otherwise not improving their position in a racing situation as soon as they are stung by a driver who in his/her personal emotional excitement excessively uses the very handy weapon currently allowed by the regulations.

It is clear to me that the use of the whip is becoming anti-societal in our sub-culture of harness racing in Ontario and like the gun, it is time to remove it.

Many years ago while racing one of my better horses at the BEAMSVILLE FAIR, the local SPCA had set up a position at the head of the stretch at the request of the public. That year my horse won the OJC - sponsored race blanket as other drivers could no longer beat on their horses for fear of being charged, I surmised at that time. After winning more than 65 races lifetime, I am not so sure. What I did learn when he set the track record at MARKHAM, is that with an open bridle, he could see the driver's arm (and whip) go up and sped up likely based on fear. I had told the driver not to use the whip but to let him know you had one. Later that day after realizing this was his fifth and last heat of racing in three days, I asked John Fitzgerald what he did to get the race of his life from him. He said he did what I asked him to do, "I reached out and back to show him the whip before tucking it under my arm for the remainder of the race. He just sped up and didn't look back."

A similar thing happened at ELMIRA August 4, 1986 when he helped RON WAPLES in the N.A. Driver's Challenge. Ron was talking with one of the American drivers waiting for the gate, when the race started. OVERCOOKIE liked to be on the gate, but there was no way he was moving so Ron reached under the seat and slapped his heels once with the whip. He never looked back! My regular driver tried the same thing weeks later, never worked again!