

Head Office
Ontario Racing Commission
10 Carlson Court
Suite 400
Toronto, Ontario
M9W 6L2

RE: USE OF THE WHIP

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing to you to provide my thoughts on the current whipping rules that are in place. My family and I are heavily involved in the industry. I am a licenced trainer/owner and board of director for both OHHA and OSAS. Horse racing is important to me and I want to ensure it has a long lived future.

First and foremost, like any business, we always have to be conscious of the fans, the customers, and their changing values and interests in society as time goes on. Currently, as a horseperson and a fan in my opinion we are not being conscious of society's changing attitudes. For so long we have ignored society's negative views towards whipping a horse. Can you really blame them? For fans in the grandstand, what they're seeing clearly is horses being abused and what they are hearing is the slashing and cracking of the whip. It's an absolute disgrace! It's this part of racing that makes it hard to convince new fans to come out and support the sport! On numerous occasions I've been told by many about the brutality of racing and do you think I could come up with a defensible argument against their statement? How could I possibly when they are absolutely correct! I'm actually surprised an organization such as the humane society has not already stepped in and put a stop to the whipping. Shall we as an industry wait for that to happen or should we be one step ahead and make a bold move for the better and set an example? I would highly suggest the latter.

From a racetrack owner's point of view, how can they possibly market a product if customers don't agree with the product? It doesn't matter how many millions of dollars you inject into marketing a product if the customer doesn't like your product, it won't be successful. This has to change!

Racing is known to be a dangerous sport but have we considered that we just might be minimizing that danger if the whipping rules were changed? For instance, in the Breeder's Crown elimination at Mohawk in October of 2006 how do you think John Campbell felt after breaking his leg after being interfered with by Ron Peirce's driving which was a direct result of one handed whipping and losing control of his horse down the stretch. More recently, the spill at Chester in August of this year involving Cat Manzi and Eric Goodell was also caused by excessively whipping a tired horse that finally just got fed up and fell to his knees creating a chain reaction. The end result, well I'm sure Manzi could fill you in on the details of his broken clavicle and fractured ribs. These are just a couple examples of accidents that could have been prevented had the whipping rules been different.

I've heard some driver's convey that by instituting a whipping rule such as having a line in each hand at all times would be dangerous. I can't see this at all being a valid argument when it has been clear that accidents as noted above have been caused by one handed whipping. After all, if this rule was enforced you would think that having two hands holding the lines at all times would provide more control and safety. And then there's the view that if this rule was in place, driver's would just adjust their handholds back even further to allow longer reins and thus more ability to whip the horse. Well this is where rules would be put in place to prevent these type of avoidance tactics from happening.

With any change, everyone in horse racing is affected which is why I think a lot of horsepeople are so against change. They are afraid of it. We can't hold back on enforcing rules for this reason. We need to move forward. The drivers I believe will be most impacted by a whipping rule change. At a minimum, I'm sure most of the successful drivers would refuse any potential change. And why would anyone want to change if they are successful and making a good living at what they are already doing? These views are unfortunately selfish in nature and are narrow minded. As an industry body we need to start making changes for the sport as a whole and not cater to certain people because they are comfortable with the current practices. After all, a change to the whipping rules doesn't limit or

handicap one horse or driver. It affects everyone which implies that each person competing in a race will be on an even level playing field.

Most recently, Pompano has taken a stance and has introduced new track rules regarding whipping as I'm sure you are aware. Not only are strict penalties enforced for striking a horse below the shaft and excessive whipping but drivers are prohibited at all times from one handed whipping or whipping behind their head or hips. This is a perfect example of what Ontario needs to implement and enforce!

The future of harness racing and its success is driven by the individuals who have the authority and power to make decisions vital to the industry. You, the ORC, has that authority and power to institute change. Please act upon that ability and do what's right for the sport of harness racing and so many affected by it.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Duncan, CA