

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the whipping issue in Ontario. The reality is that there are significant rules and penalties already in place to deter the abuse or overuse of whips in Ontario. If one were to turn back the clock to 1999 and the previous whipping rules there would be very few if any infractions called today under those prior rules. Rules were introduced that led to a lot of subjective decisions by Ontario Racing Commission judges. What may be a violation to one judge may be perfectly acceptable use of the whip to another. Most if not all of the infractions that are called today are as a result of these subjective rules and their interpretation.

I have read articles that rely on the frequency of whipping violations being posted on Standardbred Canada as an indication that there is a whipping problem. Drivers are not, in most instances being called for abusing the animal. They are being fined, and in some instances suspended because of the motion of their arm or the frequency of the whipping action. If there are drivers abusing animals than the Ontario Racing Commission and the horse racing industry have the tools, and the obligation to deal with that individual. There is no need to penalize the entire industry because of the actions of a few. The whip is an important and necessary tool for a driver. The proper use of that tool is important to the safety of both the horses and the drivers. I would urge the industry to not confuse the whipping rule any further by adding more restrictions to its use and to identify and deal with those that abuse the current rules.

Thank you

Mark Williams



