

From racecourse to your horse

You may think the **Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB)** exists solely to support the racing industry, but its rich history of advancing veterinary medicine has benefited all horses. *H&H* looks at how the Levy Board has supported the thoroughbred and examines how its initiatives help keep your horse healthy



The HBLB is funded by racing and supports a lot of thoroughbred research...

THE HBLB isn't an organisation that horse owners encounter on a frequent basis, yet the effects of the Levy Board's veterinary research programme are far-reaching.

Established by the government in 1961, the HBLB is by law required to levy a fee on British bookmakers each year. It then distributes this fee in ways designed to improve horseracing, support breeds and advance the health of the thoroughbred.

The money is invested strategically into veterinary science, with a strong focus on preventing infectious diseases, improving the management of musculoskeletal injuries and supporting thoroughbred breeding.

But many of the HBLB's programmes inform and advance equine veterinary medicine in general, meaning all types and breed of horse benefit.

Vast body of research

THROUGH its targeted support for a wide range of research

programmes, the HBLB has led the way on enhancing our understanding of veterinary issues affecting the thoroughbred.

Over the past 50 years the HBLB has funded and supported work into topics as diverse as biomechanics, clinical pathology, reproduction and equine demographics, areas that impact upon every breed of horse.

The Levy Board provides funding for researchers who apply the latest molecular and genetic techniques to diseases that affect all types of horses and ponies.

This cutting-edge science has supported the development of a blood test for small redworm, strategies to address the current threat of resistance to wormers, rapid analysis of nasal swabs for herpes and major advances towards vaccines for strangles.

Disease control and understanding has benefited hugely from HBLB-funded

... and the knowledge gained from these veterinary projects helps improve horse health across all breeds and ages of animal

research. In addition to supporting work designed to better knowledge of equine diseases, the Levy Board supports the codes of practice on contagious equine metritis, equine herpes, equine viral arteritis and many other important contagious diseases.

You may ask how this helps you and your horse. The answer is that these codes of practice give vets a clear practical understanding of how to react to a disease outbreak and to minimise spread and further infection. You only need to look at the various outbreaks of equine herpes this year to understand the importance of this.

Supporting vets

ALTHOUGH it is allocating over £1.6million in 2012/13, the HBLB has to juggle a range of priorities. In addition to its extensive research programme, the Levy Board also funds post-graduate research and training.

The HBLB allocates approximately 20% of its annual veterinary budget to scholarships, meaning that vets in your local practice could have received funding from the HBLB to improve the way they treat your horse. And



even if your vet hasn't received direct funding from the Levy Board it is likely that the techniques, understanding and knowledge they employ on a daily basis will be, in part, formed by research supported by it.

It is perhaps fair to say that the HBLB is one of horse sport's hidden gems. But the Levy Board's relatively low profile among everyday owners shouldn't detract from the breadth of its work and contribution to the health of all horses in Britain. It has funded an immense amount of research that informs clinical practice, knowledge and understanding — and all of this impacts upon every horse in the country. **H&H**



For more information visit: racehorsehealth.hblb.org.uk

Did you know ...? The HBLB has funded breakthroughs on:

- Heart murmurs
- Lower respiratory tract inflammation
- Understand the behaviour of equine influenza
- Equine grass sickness
- Sudden death
- Risk factors and early detection of limb fractures
- Stem cell therapy