

# Horserace Betting Board

An Impact Report  
March 2026





# Horserace Betting Levy Board Objectives

## GOAL 1

The improvement of breeds of horses



## GOAL 2

The advancement or encouragement of veterinary science or veterinary education



## GOAL 3

The improvement of horseracing



# Executive Summary

The Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB) partnered with impact consultancy Benesys to review a sample of its grant funding, with the aim of illustrating both the breadth of its work and the impact potential of Levy-funded initiatives across the horseracing industry.

The two initiatives featured here are **National Racehorse Week (NRW)**, managed by Great British Racing, and the Education Programme delivered by **Retraining of Racehorses (RoR)**. The Levy Board has funded National Racehorse Week since its inception in 2021, and it has provided funding to RoR since 2006, with funding specifically directed towards its Education Programme since 2022, alongside other grants.

While the objectives set out in each annual grant application have evolved over time, the report analyses how Levy Board support has contributed to wider sector outcomes and specifically to its third strategic goal: *the improvement of horseracing*.

Over time, HBLB's support has enabled both initiatives to expand their reach, engage wider audiences, and take a more holistic approach to the racing and equestrian communities. National Racehorse Week now highlights the full lifecycle of the racehorse, from breeding to retirement. The RoR Education Programme works with a wider range of equestrian professionals, extending beyond former racehorse owners to strengthen the knowledge, skills and standards that support lifelong care.

The report illustrates the extent to which Levy Board funding has contributed to initiatives that strengthen understanding, engagement, and long-term welfare within the horseracing and wider equestrian sectors.



# National Racehorse Week Overview



**Project:** National Racehorse Week

**Number of Grants Awarded:** 5

**Period:** 2021-2025

**Total funding to date:** £286,000

**Location:** National

## GRANT OVERVIEW

Since 2021, Great British Racing has worked to protect and promote British racing by organising and delivering National Racehorse Week (NRW).

The Horserace Betting Levy Board has provided five grants during this period to support its evolution and expansion.

YEAR	AMOUNT	HBLB CONTRIBUTION
2021	£50,000	16%
2022	£50,000	23%
2023	£50,000	16%
2024	£86,000	36%
2025	£50,000	19%

## ABOUT NATIONAL RACEHORSE WEEK

National Racehorse Week is a free, nationwide open week that offers the public rare, direct access to the Thoroughbred outside of race days. As the only large-scale experiential platform of its kind, it enables people to engage first-hand with the horses and the people who care for them.

The programme is coordinated centrally by Great British Racing (GBR) and delivered locally by hosts on a voluntary basis. Over nine days, it provides structured access to key aspects of a racehorse's life and care.



## PURPOSE

To build trust through transparency by enabling direct experience of racehorse life and care.

## NATIONAL RACEHORSE WEEK ACTIVITIES

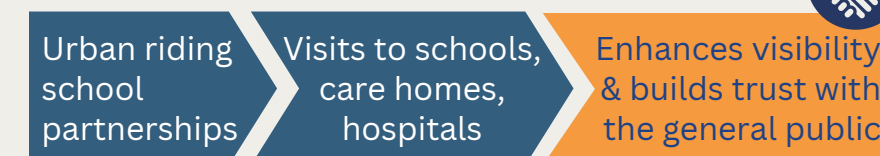
### Training and Yard Demonstrations



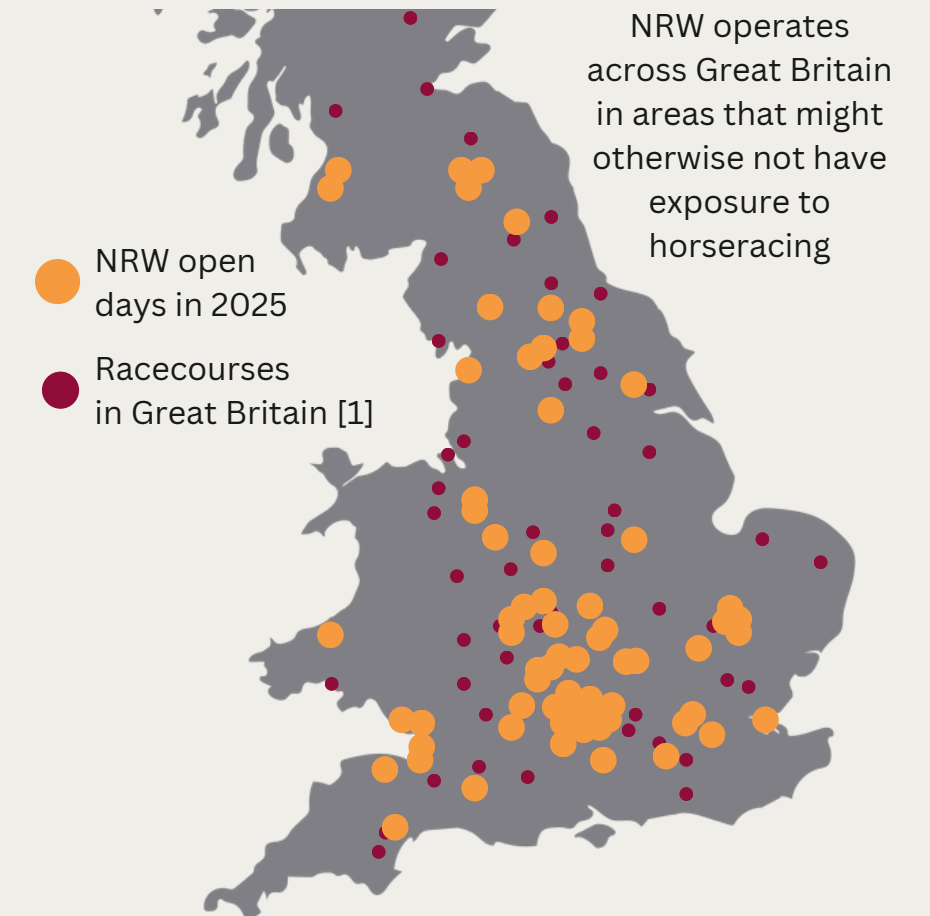
### Education and Interactive Experiences



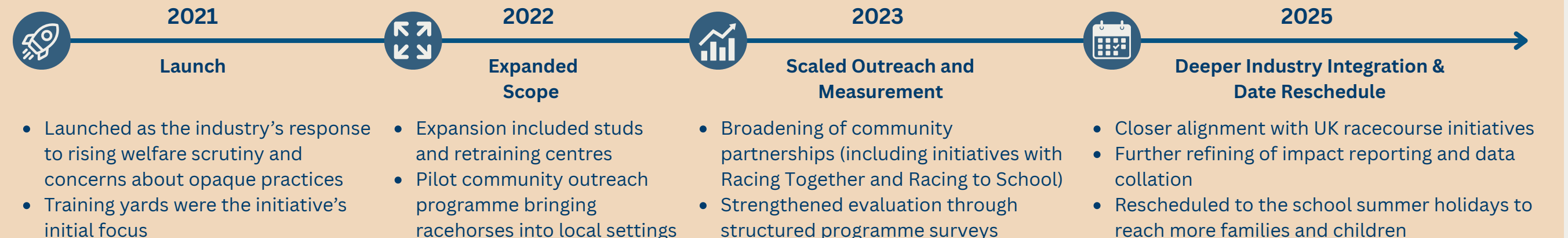
### Community Outreach



## GEOGRAPHIC REACH



## HOW NATIONAL RACEHORSE WEEK HAS EVOLVED



# National Racehorse Week

## The Need



NATIONAL RACEHORSE WEEK BUILDS TRUST, TRANSPARENCY AND OPENNESS TO IMPROVE THE PERCEPTION OF HORSERACING BY:



### RELIEVING WELFARE ANXIETY

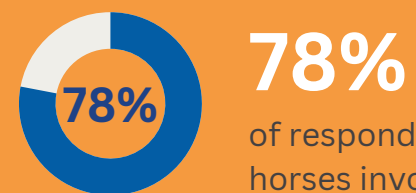
According to a 2024 Voconiq Study [2], commissioned by World Horse Welfare:

**#1**

Horse welfare is the #1 reason people **avoid** the sport

**3 in 5**

60% of the UK public are **unhappy with the status quo of horse involvement in sports**



of respondents agree that ensuring the welfare of horses involves not only avoiding harm, but also **providing them with positive experiences**

#### NRW RESPONSE

Open access to yards, studs and retraining centres can demonstrate the lifelong care of a racehorse, presenting breeding, training and aftercare as a connected system of responsibility



### BROADENING AND DIVERSIFYING ENGAGEMENT

The Voconiq Study suggests that awareness of the sport and its career pathways remains limited, particularly among younger audiences.

**AGE: 18-28** An age group **particularly critical of horse sports**. Demonstrating high sensitivity to welfare issues, elitism, and lack of transparency



of respondents agree that **'lack of awareness about the training and employment pathways in horse sports'** hindered access to horse sports in the UK

**3 in 4**

people surveyed in a 2023 British Equestrian survey felt **underrepresented** in horse riding and related activities [3]

#### NRW RESPONSE

Targeting new, underrepresented audiences and removing barriers to race attendance and careers can strengthen the industry's future resilience



### DEEPENING PUBLIC CONNECTION

A Project Beacon research study carried out by the British Horseracing Authority [4] suggested that a significant proportion of the public feel distant from the horses and the people behind racing.

**1 in 4**

of respondents said they **don't feel personally invested** in the races

**1 in 5**

of the public feel they **'don't know enough'** about racing, citing the complexity of betting and race structures as a barrier to access



of survey participants indicated they had **'no knowledge'** or **'a little knowledge of horse sports'** [2]

#### NRW RESPONSE

Partnering with charities and community groups to showcase the horse's social value facilitates broader, meaningful and positive interactions with racehorses

# National Racehorse Week Outcomes and Impact



## OVER 5 YEARS THE INITIATIVE HAS GENERATED



70

events at schools



82

events in collaboration with other charities



197

community events bringing horses into the community



11,200

attendees engaged through NRW initiatives



65,000

free opportunities for the public to see racehorses up close

## QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE IMPACT OF NATIONAL RACEHORSE WEEK

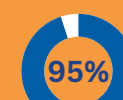
As per a 2025 post-event survey of 1,535 attendees (31% response rate):



### RELIEVE WELFARE ANXIETY



80% of new attendees reported an improved opinion of horse welfare



95% left the event with a positive impression of horseracing



“Seeing behind the scenes really improved my opinion as I witnessed how much effort goes into the horses’ wellbeing.”



### BROADEN & DIVERSIFY ENGAGEMENT



68% of bookings were attributed to people attending for the first time\*



55% of attendees had low or no knowledge of racing\*



27% of attendees were under the age of 18\*



“It opens our eyes to the fact it’s not just horseracing, you can be a jockey, or work at a yard, there are other things in that world.”



### DEEPEN PUBLIC CONNECTION



83% of attendees were more likely to watch or attend horseracing meets



98% of attendees said they would recommend the experience to a friend



“It’s my first time stroking horses and being up close with them. I didn’t realise they were so soft, and really kind.”

- Guest of The Pony Club charity programme at Dan Skelton Racing

\*Data collected at the point of booking via the website.

## COMPOUNDING IMPACT POTENTIAL



“National Racehorse Week brings a host of benefits to our industry. It gets people involved and interested to learn more. It’s also about connecting with the young people and creating new fans. We had over 120 youngsters attend last year, some who’ve never been up close to a horse. If you get people interested at a young age, it could spark an interest for life.”

- Racehorse trainer Oliver Greenall

# Retraining of Racehorses, Education Programme Overview



- Project:** Education Programme\*
  - Number of Grants:** 4
  - Period:** 2022-2025
  - Total project funding to date:** £363,000
  - Location:** National
- \*HBLB also funds other RoR projects, not included in this report.

## GRANT OVERVIEW

Retraining of Racehorses (RoR) provides practical advice, dedicated support and a national safety net for former racehorses in need.

Since 2022, HBLB has awarded four restricted grants specifically to support RoR's Education Programme, enabling owners to access the knowledge and resources required to transition their horses safely from racing into new careers.

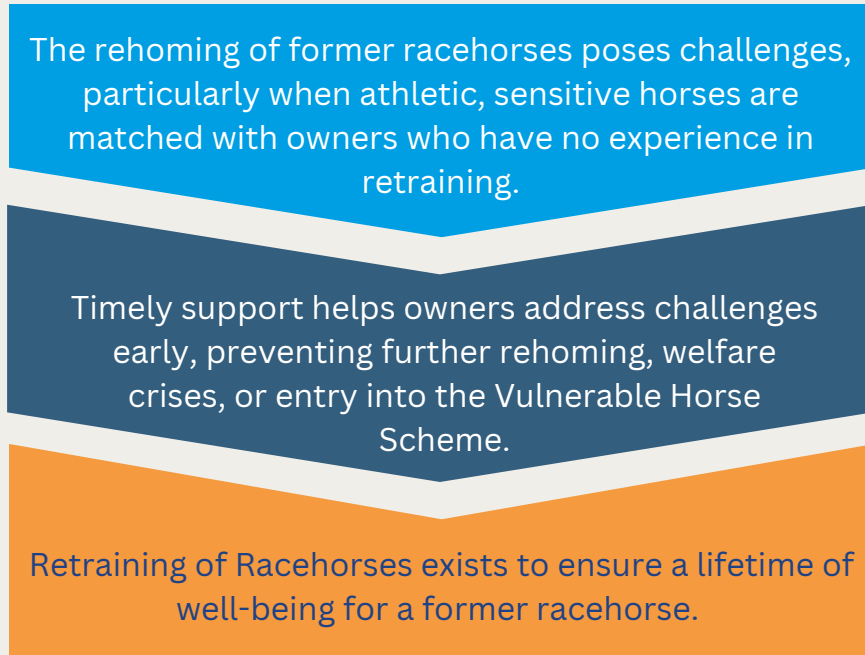
YEAR	AMOUNT
2022	£60,000
2023	£72,000
2024	£126,000
2025	£105,000

## ABOUT RETRAINING OF RACHORSES

**MISSION**  
To safeguard the wellbeing of all former racehorses

RoR provides central oversight for aftercare in Great Britain. Historically, the aftercare landscape was fragmented, with several organisations undertaking valuable work but without coordination. In recent years, RoR has taken on a strategic leadership role, coordinating good practice, acting as a conduit for funding, and delivering some services directly.

While racehorses are bred for racing, their careers are short relative to their life expectancy. Most of their lives are spent beyond the track, requiring retraining to transition from the high-intensity, tightly structured racing environment to a slower, more varied second career.



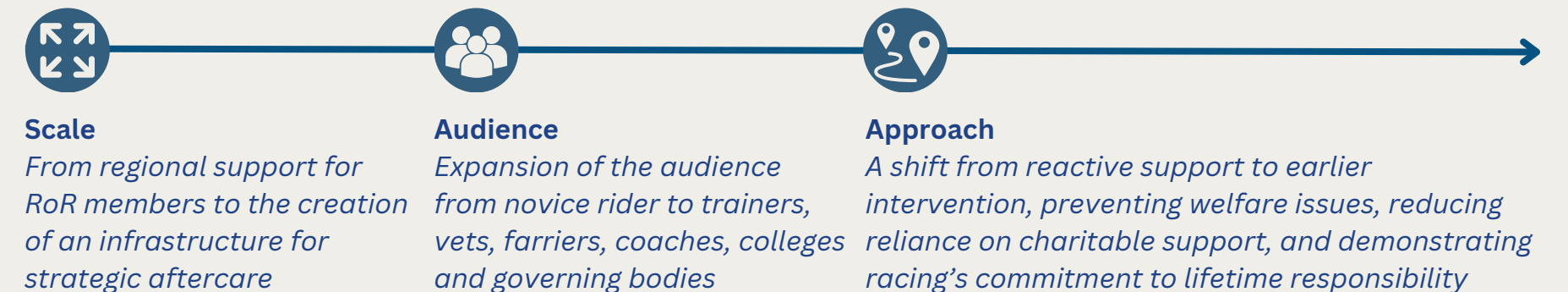
## ABOUT THE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

RoR's education programmes support the racing community and prospective owners to build the knowledge and confidence needed to take on former racehorses. By providing practical guidance on retraining and management, the programmes help horses transition into informed and secure second homes.

## PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES



## HOW THE PROGRAMME HAS CHANGED WITH HBLB FUNDING



# Retraining of Racehorses, Education Programme

## The Need



### KEY CHALLENGES FOR A FORMER RACEHORSE

**2,500**

Horses retire annually from British horseracing industry

**5 - 7 years**

Average age of **Flat racehorse** at retirement

**10 - 12+ years**

Average age of **Jump racehorse** at retirement

**25 - 28 years**

Flat and Jump Racehorse average life expectancy

This leaves around 10-20 years of post-racing life requiring responsible care and purpose.

#### SECURING PURPOSE

Without a clear second career, horses face a greater risk of unstable ownership or neglect. While Thoroughbreds are versatile, each will have individual temperament, skills, and abilities. Finding the right new role for the horse is essential for long-term welfare.

#### COST-OF-LIVING

Rising equestrian costs are putting greater strain on owners. In 2025, UK hay prices doubled to £130-£350 per tonne, contributing to broader welfare concerns [6].

Per tonne, a large bale of hay costs:

**£73** in December 2024



**£131** in January 2026



#### RETRAINING COMPLEXITY

Moving from elite racing to a second career requires careful management. A peer-reviewed study of more than 1,100 retired Thoroughbreds in Australia found that, compared with non-racehorse controls, during their first year of new ownership, ex- racehorses were [7]:

**x 4**

more likely to experience musculoskeletal injuries

**x 3**

more likely to develop foot or hoof problems

**x 2**

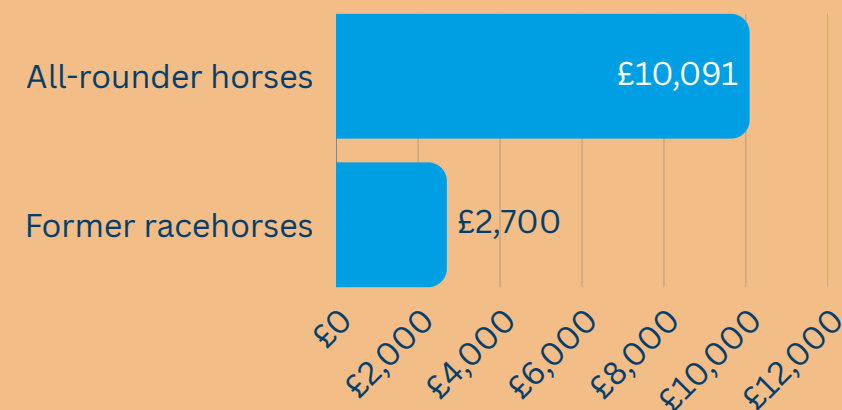
as likely to experience behavioural issues

**x 2**

as likely to suffer gastrointestinal disease

#### COMPETITIVE PRICES

Average Price of Online Horse sales [5]



Former racehorses are comparatively more affordable to buy (~£2,700 on average), but ongoing care can be higher due to specialist feed, farriery and veterinary needs. Ensuring owners understand these costs is key

### EDUCATION PROGRAMME - GOALS & NEED

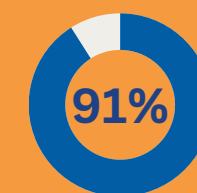


#### PREVENTING HORSE VULNERABILITY

Providing support and guidance to new, former racehorse owners is preventative, aiming to reduce the number of horses requiring entry into RoR's Vulnerable Horse Scheme or other forms of charitable intervention. Recurring themes include poor basic management (feet, condition), which are entirely preventable through education.

**69**

Horses entered RoR's **Vulnerable Horse Scheme** in 2025

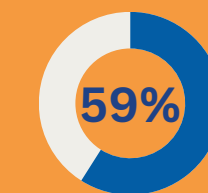


of new RoR members **joined specifically for educational support**, signalling demand



#### UPSKILLING THE COMMUNITY

Building owners' confidence and skills to retrain former racehorses for leisure or competition—alongside CPD for coaches, vets, physiotherapists, farriers, and MSK practitioners — expands the pool of relevant expertise.



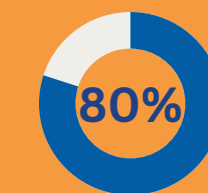
of horses entering the Vulnerable Horse Scheme are relinquished due to an owner's **knowledge gaps** or **inability to cope**

"Retraining and Repurposing" is repeatedly noted as the **#1** area owners need help with, according to feedback from new member surveys



#### STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY

Data often becomes fragmented when horses move into private leisure ownership, fuelling mistrust and weakening accountability. Each clinic, webinar, and event creates a data touchpoint that encourages owners to register with RoR, helping the industry build the evidence needed to demonstrate accountability to regulators.



of **former racehorses** are **traceable**, according to the 2023 Thoroughbred Census [8]

Untracked former racehorses may face neglect, abandonment, multiple rehoming or even slaughter

# Retraining of Racehorses, Education Programme Outcomes and Impact

## 2025 IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

### Preventing Horse Vulnerability

121

horses were supported through RoR's welfare safety net in 2025



### Strengthening Traceability

1,685

new horses were registered during 2025

15,446

former racehorses registered in total



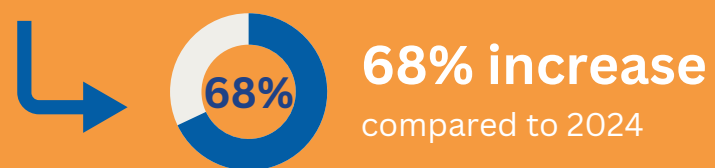
### Upskilling Community

264

educational events were delivered in 2025

2,808

participants attended educational activity



“I am a new member to RoR, but because of the team of people at the camp, there is no doubt I will be doing more and more with my racehorse and the RoR. Thank you for the opportunity of the camp.”

“My mother-in-law, my daughter, and I very much enjoyed the Realistic Retraining event. It was always good to see how we are doing compared to other ex-racers, as re-training can be a very slow process as the horses adjust to becoming riding horses. Thank you to all who organised and participated in the event.”

“So looking forward to achieving more with my fabulous ex-racer, with your help, support & advice. Never felt so welcome at events, being with people who understand the Thoroughbred, enabling us to give them the very best they truly deserve.”

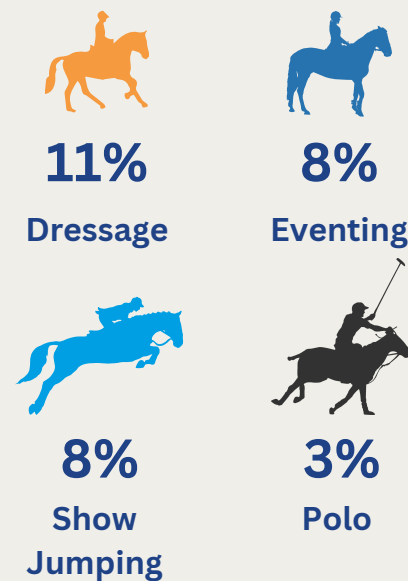


## COMPOUNDING IMPACT POTENTIAL

### Protecting the Industry

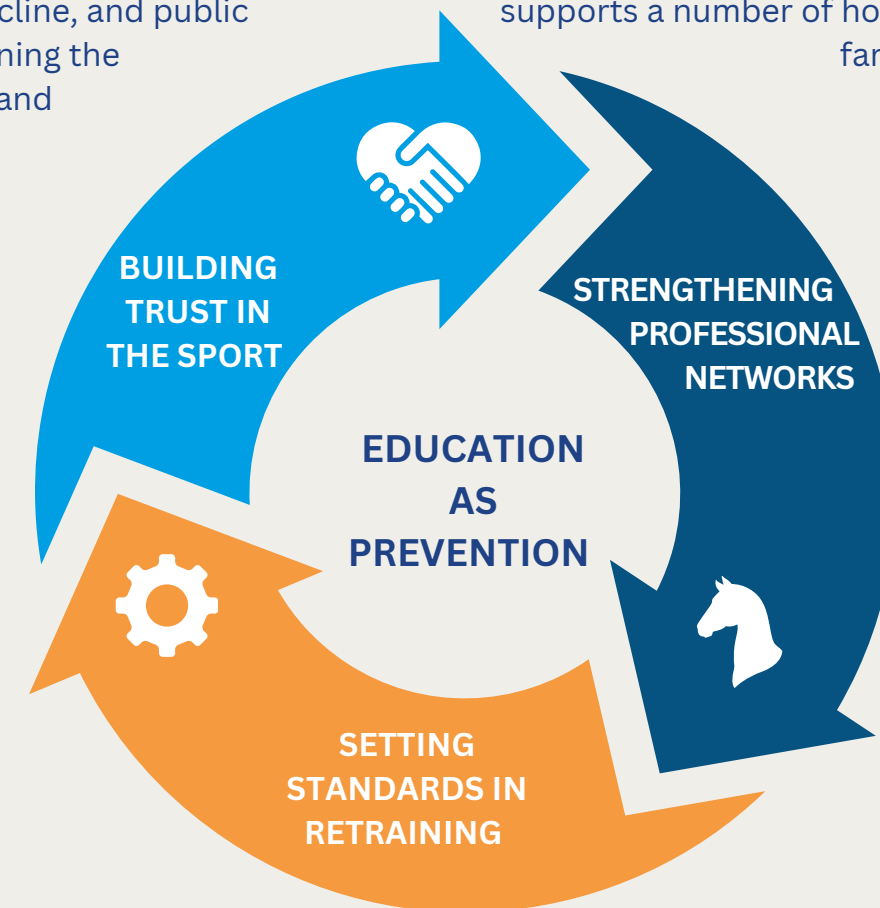
Education and effective retraining pathways demonstrate racing's commitment to lifetime responsibility. As successful second careers become more visible, welfare risks decline, and public confidence grows- strengthening the sport's long-term legitimacy and social licence to operate.

Retrained racehorses can successfully transition into a number of second careers, additionally benefiting other equine sports [8]:

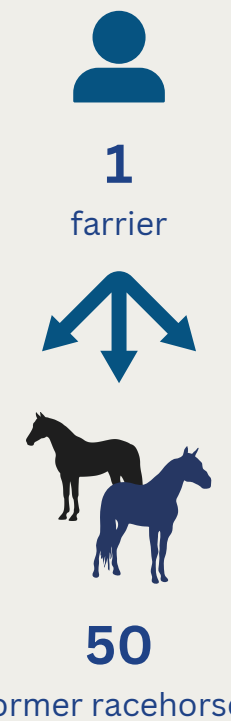


### Expanding Thoroughbred Expertise

By equipping vets, farriers, and coaches with Thoroughbred-specific expertise, specialist knowledge is spread across the sector. As each professional supports a number of horses, improved care can reach far more former racehorses than the training alone.



### Multiplier Effect:



### Raising Sector Standards

Education sets clearer expectations for responsible retraining. The Retrainer Approval Scheme signals trusted welfare and training standards, guiding owners towards qualified support. Engagement with equine colleges and youth organisations embeds these practices early, creating a compounding effect as better standards are passed on to future riders, future owners and professionals.



## Horserace Betting Levy Board

The Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB) is a UK statutory body that was established by the Betting Levy Act 1961. It operates in accordance with the provisions of the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (as amended). It is a non-departmental public body (NDPB), and its sponsoring Government department is the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.



<http://hblb.org.uk>

# BENESYS

INTELLIGENT GIVING

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## Sources:

[1] British Racecourses, “British Racecourses Directory”, <https://www.britishracecourses.org/>.

[2] Voconiq, National Survey of UK Citizen Attitudes Towards UK Equestrian Sport Industries, commissioned by World Horse Welfare and British Equestrian, 2024.

[3] British Equestrian, “Horses for All: Report Summary and Response”, April 2023, [https://www.britishequestrian.org.uk/assets/EXTRA\\_Docs/HorsesForAll\\_report\\_summary\\_and\\_response\\_FINAL\\_05.04.23.pdf](https://www.britishequestrian.org.uk/assets/EXTRA_Docs/HorsesForAll_report_summary_and_response_FINAL_05.04.23.pdf).

[4] British Horseracing Authority (BHA), “Project Beacon Research”, September 2025.

[5] Whickr, “The Price of Horses for Sale Online”, <https://www.whickr.com/uk/en/blog/the-price-of-horses-for-sale-online/>.

[6] BBC News, “Horse welfare concerns and industry response”, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce9yz4j52n2o>.

[7] Hitchens, P.L., Morrice-West, A.V., Stevenson, M.A. & Whitton, R.C., “Thoroughbred Use, Health and Owner Satisfaction Following Retirement from Racing in Australia”, Australian Veterinary Journal, Vol. 97, No. 8, 2019, pp. 271–280.

[8] Horse Welfare Board and Hartpury University, “Thoroughbred Census: Versatility of Former Racehorses”, <https://horsepwr.co.uk/news/intelligence-shows-versatility-of-former-racehorses>.

