

It's a breeding crisis!



Last year only 647 national hunt foals were born in this country! Around 8,000 foals a year are needed to meet the needs of the UK horse racing calendar and racing is having to rely on the majority coming from abroad. In particular, breeding for national hunt racing, is reaching crisis point. The UK's breeding industry is believed to be worth around £281m a year and employs 86,000 people, frequently in rural communities where there are few other jobs. However, many small breeders especially, are generating losses and supply from the UK industry is not keeping up with demand from racecourses, which host more than 1,450 fixtures a year.

"We are totally dependent on imports from Ireland and France to deliver our racing programme," said Philip Newton, a board member of the Thoroughbred Breeders' Association.

Mr Newton argued that in any other industry. "You would be foolish in the extreme" to rely so heavily on imports, particularly as Ireland and France have their own racing calendars.

The association is keen to highlight the struggles of the breeding industry, which supports Britain's second biggest spectator sport. "These are rural jobs. We are a hugely important part of the rural economy," Mr Newton added.

On the Thursday of the Cheltenham Festival only 11 of the 110 runners were bred in Britain. The focus on breeding comes after warnings from the bookmakers last week that an increased 25pc rate of tax on fixed-odds gaming machines, unveiled in the Budget, would undermine their ability to continue supporting the horse and greyhound racing industries.



Bookies pay for bigger fields

Figures show that the average field size for all-weather races in January was 8.6, up from 8.1 the previous year. This was part of the agreement of the 53rd levy scheme, with the four largest retail bookmakers agreeing to make additional contributions of £4.5 million on top of statutory levy payments. Approximately £4.2m has been committed towards extending the provision of prize-money in eligible Class 2 contests, which now pay down to eighth place,

and Class 3-6 races, which pay to sixth place for Flat and jump racing. More runners make it harder for punters to pick the winners - what a surprise!

Did you know?

The world's fastest racehorse is Stone of Folca who covered Epsom's 5 furlongs in just 53.69 seconds.



Island raiders!

Last year was a record-breaking one for British runners abroad as, for the first time, trainers from these shores saddled overseas raiders on more than 1,000 occasions. Remarkably, the country that enjoyed the biggest explosion of British visitors was the Channel Islands as no fewer than 75 horses made the four-and-a-half-hour ferry journey to take part in one of the Islands' ten meetings. Just three years earlier the number of cross-Channel equine competitors had been a mere three.

"Trainers George Baker, Neil Mulholland and Brendan Powell, to name a few, have clearly enjoyed travelling to the Islands to race and have encouraged their owners to make a weekend of it by coming to see their charge in action. So a big thank you to them for their efforts," says the Island's racing supremo. The money on offer is far from spectacular - Newmarket trainer Tony Carson won the richest prize of 2014, the Ravenscroft Channel Island Handicap, with the 65-rated gelding Hail Promenader, yet pocketed only £3,100. However, travel allowances are available. British trainers are

eligible for a payment of £250 per runner at Guernsey's one-day-a-year racecourse, L'Ancrese, whilst a foreign trainer gets £150 for a single runner at one of the nine annual meetings at Les Landes in Jersey plus a little less, on a sliding scale, if he travels over with more than one horse. The real attraction for owners considering a visit is the likelihood of an enjoyable day out. Decent crowds of between 1,500 and 2,000 are the norm at Les Landes, whilst L'Ancrese's May Bank Holiday fixture was blessed with beautiful weather last year, prompting an attendance of about 3,000.

"The atmosphere in the car parks is akin to point-to-points, with picnickers making the most of the fine weather we get in the Islands. The members' marquee is also a very good dining option and day membership is available if required, although booking is essential as it's very popular. Neither course has stalls, nor are there plans to have them. It is a flag or tape start, even in a five-furlong race. Racing in both islands is unique and to say it's like a point-to-point is fair, though it is so much more than that!"

Ownership levels still fall

Many owners agree that prize-money is a key indicator of the health of the sport. The £9m increase in 2014 included an extra £6m from racecourses and sponsors, and the contractual prize-money agreements introduced at the beginning of last year. With the annual cost of owning a racehorse in excess of £20,000, it is essential that, as well as improving returns to

owners across all levels, the general experience of ownership is enhanced. A number of racecourses deserve credit for recent improvements they have made to their raceday offering to owners, but there is still a long way to go to deliver the quality of experience that an owner should consistently expect whenever they have a runner.

WINNING POST

THE REGULAR NEWSLETTER FROM HOMEBRED RACING

SUMMER 2015

Runners slowing down!



Figures recently released by the BHA indicate the slide in the horse population, with 87,571 runners last year representing a fall of 3,265 - or 3.6% - on 2013.

The BHA are on a mission to increase average field sizes, with some of their measures, such as the trial of removing all-weather races at short notice in the event of four declarations or fewer for a race, causing controversy. Paul Bittar, who has now left his position as Chief Executive at the BHA, said: "The number of small-field races remains one of the critical issues currently facing the sport, and other year-end figures highlight the task ahead".

"Incentivising runners through increases in prize-money is one of several initiatives designed to help tackle the issue, but ensuring we do all we can as an industry to maximise prize-money will always remain integral to this cause".



Is it something I've said?

The green, green grass of home!

Celestial Bay and Delagoa Bay who've performed so well for us during last season are enjoying their well earned holiday at home. Plenty of spring grass will recharge their batteries for a summer campaign.

Richard Hughes on 'last to first' win on Celestial Bay



Richard's final season

Champion jockey Richard Hughes, who won so spectacularly for us on Celestial Bay, has begun what will be his final year in the saddle after revealing his plan to retire. 42-year-old Richard, regarded by many as the sport's supreme stylist, has taken part in a BHA trainers' course in Newmarket. Richard said: "I feel physically like I could ride for another five years. My weight is fine and my hunger is as strong as ever. I still have a huge desire to ride as many winners as I

can but I know I can't ride forever. However, I know I can train nearly forever!" Richard will be based at Ken Cunningham-Brown's yard in Stockbridge, Hampshire. Richard Hannon said on his website: "Hughesie will be going all out to ride as many winners for this season, but he is very excited about his new venture and we wish him all the best. We look forward to being rivals on the track next year and also at the bloodstock sales in the autumn."

Tough at the top

The BHA waved goodbye to Paul Bittar in January and welcomed Nick Rust into their High Holborn HQ with the news that prize-money would hit an all-time high in 2015. Our sport faces many challenges but the most immediate concern is the lack of raw materials, i.e. racehorses, to serve the current number of race meetings staged each year.



Nick Rust, new man at the top

The appointment of Mr Rust, who has spent his entire working life protecting the interests of bookmakers is, to say the least, unlikely to change matters. Previous governments have been anything but quick to act if past events are anything to go on - we haven't the space to go into the history of the Tote sell-off but needless to say our sport came out of that decade-long debacle the worse for wear - yet again!

Celestial Bay, ridden by Jack Dinsmore to an easy win at Chelmsford City



Celestial Bay puts Dinsmore on the map!

Celestial Bay gave apprentice jockey Jack Dinsmore his very first winner when running out an easy winner at Chelmsford City in March. The plan had been hatched by Sylvester who suspected that in an apprentice race there might well be an error in judgement about what pace to go. And so it proved - although 13 furlongs is too far for our mare, the runners crawled through the early

part of the race effectively reducing it to an extended sprint. Jack, who was having only his seventh ride in public, was instructed to wait and only deliver his challenge until the final furlong. Happily it all went to plan and Celestial Bay easily outpaced the other runners in the last 100 yards. It's a privilege to have given such a talented youngster the first of what looks sure to be many more winners!



End of a career

There's no doubt that what Tony McCoy has achieved is an extraordinary record - unlikely to ever be challenged. His retirement leaves us with mixed emotions. Sweep Home - a striking chesnut out of our broodmare Royal Brush and half brother to our successful hurdler Prince de Galles - was described by trainer Peter Bowen as 'the best horse you'll ever own'. Sweep Home made his debut in a bumper at Uttoxeter ridden by Richard Johnson. In the paddock Peter told Richard "This horse has so much

speed I'm anxious whether he'll get the trip". So turning into the straight Sweep Home was still last but scythed through the field in the final furlong to be a fast finishing fourth. Richard said "He certainly stays and if I'd been more positive he'd have won 25 lengths!"

His next run was at Ludlow when he was strongly fancied to open his account. Due to a mix up in jockey bookings whilst Peter Bowen was in hospital - McCoy, instead of Johnson, was booked to ride. Tony had had a bad day, and by the last race with no winners, was also clearly in a bad mood. Sweep Home moved up to challenge but lost his footing on the bend turning into the straight - he'd clearly injured himself but unfortunately his rider continued to drive him - and he still finished second - but hobbling. His rider dismounted on the course and left without a word to owners or trainer. That also was the end of a career.

Jump to it!



After Delagoa Bay's sudden aversion to the starting stalls we've had to think about other options for her. One possibility is racing in the Channel Isles where all races are started without stalls - but that's a bit of a trek and a 4½ hour ferry ride! There's also the option of 1m 6f races at Salisbury - where it's impractical to locate the stalls. However Delagoa Bay has meanwhile shown her liking for jumps - so maybe her next run maybe in a novice hurdle. More news and plans when she's finished her spring break and will be back in training on suitably faster summer ground.

Straight from the horse's mouth...

Lord Grimthorpe, racing manager to Prince Khalid Abdullah - owner/breeder of Frankel, gave us three to follow in 2015: "I would warn you that my family are very sceptical about my tipping! Sir Michael Stoute is training a very nice 2-year-old by Dubawi - he's called Forge. A 3-year-old to follow is Epicurus, trained by Criquelette Head and is aiming for the Prix du Jockey Club. The older horse to watch is Remote trained by John Gosden - we think a lot of him".

Did you know?

Australia's famed Phar Lap was over 17hh and set 8 track records amongst his 37 wins - before the bookies got to him by poisoning him with arsenic



Victoria Pendleton, swapping 2 wheels for 4 legs!

Swapping pedal power for horse power

Britain's recently retired golden girl of cycling is to swap her bike for a horse - with the intention of riding over fences at next year's Cheltenham Festival! Victoria Pendleton has said that she was seeking a new challenge and has enlisted the help of trainer Paul Nicholls and eventing guru Yogi Breisner to help her realise her ambition to compete in the 2016 Foxhunters Chase. She said "Although I've not previously ridden I'm motivated by the scale of the challenge and my love of horses".

Yogi said "She's hugely talented and in just her first week the progress she has made is really quite remarkable. No one under-estimates the challenge but we are in a fantastic position to help Victoria become a jockey. Having the mind set of an Olympic champion, will put her in a great place to succeed whilst also bringing a much needed spotlight to the sport of horseracing". Victoria will initially aim to obtain her amateur riders licence allowing her to compete in races on the flat, over jumps and point-to-pointing.

Snapshot

Our retired jumpers Sweep Home (left) and Keep a Welcome (right) waiting for their grub outside the kitchen window!



Yarmouth back in business

Yarmouth will be racing again in July after the turf has been relaid on the track. July 23rd will be the first meeting when it's hoped that the surface will have had sufficient growing time to settle in. The plan is to invite trainers to gallop their horses on the course to assess its readiness for racing.

Snapshot

Exterminator - bought as a work horse for his owner's more fancied steed - became the most successful US racehorse winning 50 races including the Kentucky Derby



It's all in the genes...



Encosta de Lago

The top three yearlings sold at Australia's premier sale this year are all out of mares by Encosta de Lago - sire of our own dual winner Delagoa Bay. Each sold for A\$1,800,000, A\$1,750,000 and A\$1,600,000 respectively giving us more than a little encouragement that Poppy's progeny will be worth waiting for once her racing days are over!

Racing at New York's Aqueduct



US racing feels the cold

The USA experienced one of the very coldest winters in 2014/15 - which resulted in many race meetings being cancelled. New York's tracks were particularly badly affected and lack of meetings seriously depleted racing's coffers - some weeks seeing cancellations day after day. This lack of activity has called into question the viability of New York having as many as three racetracks and suggestions that Aqueduct should be closed. The track is already in some disrepair and racegoer numbers continue to

decline. It's a conundrum that even our own courses serving London continue to struggle with. And yet Kempton offers really good facilities and is within easy reach of the multitudes that live in London and the South East. All weather racing has for too long been frowned upon as low grade by its 'turf superiors' - and the racing industry itself needs to help change this perception. Whatever the grade of racing it's still competitive and exciting - and a great evening's entertainment - especially during the winter months.

Jockey's title to have new format



Mark Johnston, critical of the changes

In the last issue of Winning Post we bemoaned the difficulty to understand race planning. Now ideas are afloat to complicate the jockeys championship. It used to be simply 2 titles - one for the jumps and one for the flat between fixed calendar dates. It's now a lot more complicated with separate titles also at stake on the all weather. Whilst the trainers' championship is calculated on total prizemoney (why?) the jockeys championship is decided upon the number of races won. It would be great to have some consistency and common sense applied! Who knows whether all-weather wins are also combined with turf wins to determine who the most successful rider is? Or is it just turf wins - and between what dates? Leading trainers despair at racing's management and fear that further changes to the championships will just see top jockeys riding abroad more frequently and for longer periods. Trainer Mark Johnston says "Brace yourself for the departure of our top jockeys to sunnier climes in early October!" We understand that we should have separate titles for apprentices and conditional riders - and for the all-weather, maybe. But let's make them all run concurrently between fixed calendar dates. And the jockey who rides the most winners - wherever - between these dates is champion. Simples!

Did you know?

Biggest racecourse attendance record is held by Tokyo racecourse which attracted 223,000 racegoers.