

Much ado about nothing



Thousands of racehorses were subject to veterinary testing and additional vaccination

The BHA's overriding desire to justify its own existence recently precipitated a mini crisis in which all racing was suspended. It was a move that had the potential to not just disrupt racing but also studs and the wider breeding industry at home and abroad. This was all due to a few cases of equine flu being reported which then resulted in thousands of horses having veterinary tests to check for the virus and all being required to receive further vaccinations before racing was allowed to resume. Many trainers considered this to be another over reaction as many yards will routinely be housing horses that may be under the weather. Thankfully, racing was allowed to resume before too many other problems were found as the danger is that, once starting to examine the whole horse population, more and more issues will be identified. Quite correctly many experts also pointed out that racehorses represent only a tiny proportion of the UK's much larger horse population that was not subject to any controls on movement and so presented a much greater threat to bio-security. Having initially heralded their intervention as a great success the BHA has since remained remarkably quiet on the subject!

Did you know?

The UK's longest flat race is Royal Ascot's Queen Alexandra Stakes over 2 miles and 6 furlongs.

Jump racing at a crossroads?

Cheltenham's 2018 fixture was a disaster with the number of racehorse fatalities highlighting the debate whether such tragedies can continue to be countenanced in the name of entertainment. It's resulted in much soul searching at Cheltenham and beyond and although this year's fixture reduced fatalities, it still posed the same difficult question. Horses also get injured in flat racing, but our experience is that injuries are in fact more likely to happen just turned out in a field or even when stabled. Racehorses are delicate athletes and the problems are exacerbated by our inability to successfully care for them when catastrophic injuries occur. Jump racing has been slow to adopt simple measures to help reduce the casualties. Putting maiden races and bumpers last on the card means the most inexperienced runners are



Cheltenham - a multi-million business that needs to turn the tide of public opinion

faced with the worst underfoot conditions churned up by runners in previous races. Hurdles still have uprights that protrude above the rest of the obstacle to catch a leading or trailing leg whilst new materials are now also available for jumps to help reduce injuries. Courses must get to grips with these simple options to counter the inevitably increasing tide of public opinion and also abandon the silly talk of 'horses loving jumping'

...if that was true they could never be kept in a field. Jump racing has already been banned in much of Australia and time is running out for all UK jump tracks to be seen to be taking appropriate action to protect their runners. A well-meaning statement about horse welfare in the racecard is simply not enough. Given that Cheltenham is a multi-million pound business is it conceivable that before too long they will also be looking to host flat fixtures?

Why don't we go to the races?

A recent report highlights why people choose not to go to the races. A big factor is proven to be the England football team. Racecourse attendances in 2108 were seriously depleted by England competing in the World Cup. Professor David Forrest who undertook the survey reports: "England playing in the World Cup or the Euros is an absolute disaster for racecourse attendances".

The statistics show that when England was playing in 2018 within a one hour window of racing that attendances fell by up to 35%. More obvious factors are the weather. 10mm of rain on a race day depresses crowds at a flat fixture by 8%, rising to 12.5% if as much as 25mm falls. Forrest suggest that racing should learn from this by pushing advanced ticket sales to ensure that racegoers

are committed well in advance. Not surprisingly findings are that jump racegoers are a harder type and far less responsive to the effects of rain. One of the more interesting statistics was that every extra day between meetings incrementally increased attendance - by up to 4% for all-weather tracks when there was a week's gap between fixtures.



The longer the gap between meetings increases crowds

WINNING POST

THE REGULAR NEWSLETTER FROM HOMEBRED RACING

SPRING 2019

Lafontaine - putting her best foot forward at home



Stepping into the limelight

There have been positive vibes coming from the yard about our Canford Cliffs filly, now named Lafontaine after France's first ballerina, and we're looking forward to her racecourse debut. Trainer Sylvester Kirk says "She's a real smasher and what I really like about her is that she does everything so effortlessly - she's going to give everyone a lot of fun!" Sylvester had been toying with an entry in the

Weatherbys Super Sprint but feels 5 furlongs might just prove too sharp for her. We'll likely be looking at starting off over 6 furlongs somewhere not too far away for her first run. From her pedigree it's probable that she'll stay further in due course as Canford Cliffs was an exceptional miler and her dam Moma Lee won over 7 furlongs. Details of shares and the video available at: www.homebredracing.co.uk

Did you know?

The BHA is introducing a new set of Rules of Racing on 1st September - which will also be available online.

Racecourses needing to change gear?

Reading the recent issue of racing's monthly magazine 'Owner and Breeder' I thought that an article about improving the lot of owners at racecourses was an April fool! But seriously, the AA has been appointed to assess the raceday experience for owners at every UK racecourse. The AA maybe very familiar with a totally different form of horse power and quite what this will deliver is anyone's guess ...silly initiatives like this only confirm that racing's authorities really seem to be losing the plot. How about just asking owners what they think?



Can the AA fix racecourse hospitality?

The story behind a name...



Lafontaine - France's first ballerina

As you all know, naming our new Canford Cliffs filly proved somewhat tortuous - and it was really Sylvester's intervention that resulted in meeting his request for a better name than any we had suggested! Being bred in France prompted possible thoughts about famous French dancers leading us to name her Lafontaine - which certainly met the brief for a suitably classy name! Mademoiselle Lafontaine was a French dancer and is regarded as France's first professional ballerina. Born in 1655, she played an integral part in the development of opera ballet at the Paris Opera under the auspices of Louis XIV. In 1861 Lafontaine made her debut in Le Triomphe de L'Amour... the first public performance that included female dancers. In this era it must have been particularly challenging as dancing was restrained by the long costumes, but nonetheless she became known as 'the queen of dance'. Lafontaine continued as the leading ballerina at the Paris Opera for over a decade before retiring to a convent where she died in 1738 aged 83.

How do you judge success?



Arrogate - the world's best racehorse?

In terms of prize-money the list of all-time biggest racehorse earners makes for interesting reading as many will be unfamiliar names. The biggest earner of all time is the USA's Arrogate who has amassed an amazing \$17,422,600 in prize-money. Next is Winx, the all-conquering Australian mare, with significant winnings of £12,619,301, closely followed by Gun Runner (£12,238,136), Gentildonna (£12,224,036), Orfevre (£12,185,908), Kitasan Black (£11,454,079), Buena Vista (£10,262,876), Gold Ship (£9,757,292), California Chrome (£9,658,673) and Redzel (£8,856,725). Sad to say that none of the more familiar names of European runners come anywhere close.

Top European runner is Enable winning £8,007,026, followed by Highland Reel, Thunder Snow and Cirrus Des Aigles (closely related to our Study The Stars both being out of Septieme Ciel mares) and Treve. Such league tables raise the perennial question about relative merits of each performer... how would Winx compete with Enable or Treve? Would Arrowgate have been a match for Cirrus Des Aigles... and where does Frankel fit amongst all these? Timeform ratings probably provide the clearest guidance, but what's obvious is that winnings are not necessarily the best guide to anything other than the fact that our prize-money at home lags far behind the rest of the world.



Enable - Europe's best?

Bred for the job?

The exploits of Grand National hero Tiger Roll highlight the mysteries of breeding. Tiger Roll might have been expected to be a decent flat performer being out of a winning flat mare by 2,000 Guineas winner Entrepreneur and his sire Authorized being winner of the Racing Post Trophy as a two-year-old and the Derby winner at three. With racehorses nothing is always as might be expected - after all Red Rum won over 5 furlongs (ridden by Lester Piggott) before going on to Grand National immortality himself. A rough rule of thumb has

always been that a three-year-old winner over a mile and a half would make a three mile jumper as a six-year-old and beyond. A two mile hurdler needs to be a much speedier type. Leading jockey Mark Perrett, who rode at the top over obstacles and on the flat, always said he looked for a good 7 furlong horse to make a decent hurdler. Although regally flat-bred youngsters often prove to be out and out stayers over jumps, the instances of stoutly bred National Hunt families producing speedy flat performers is extremely rare.

Tiger Roll - bred for the flat



Snapshot

Newly harrowed, stripy fields mean that summer isn't far away at the Homebred stud.

Who'll be 2019 champ?

As the flat gets into full swing it'll be interesting to see who's ridden most winners by the end of the season. Silvestre de Sousa has got off to a flying start but there are others likely to be snapping at his heels as the year progresses. A relatively new challenger might prove to be PJ McDonald who's picking up plenty of good rides from leading yards and could follow in the footsteps of Jim Crowley in making the successful switch from jump racing. Oisín Murphy is sure to ride plenty of winners again whilst efforts from some



PJ McDonald - sure to ride plenty of winners

of the other big guns like William Buick and James Doyle may be thwarted by their retainers to ride for big owners. Watch this space!

Did you know?

Fittingly, the winner of the very first Grand National was named Lottery!

Memorable quotes

"The horse is nobility without conceit, friendship without envy, beauty without vanity. A willing servant, yet never a slave"

Ronald Duncan

Snapshot

Southwell's all-weather track is now hosting evening racing thanks to new hi-tec floodlighting that's been installed.



Study The Stars - rated by Goldmine as the result of an excellent 20/20 mating



Written in the stars?

Or more likely in the DNA... breeding experts have spent millennia researching how to create the top performing horse whilst traditionalists have relied upon 'breeding the best to the best - and hoping for the best'. Computers have made the task of analyzing bloodlines, results and potential matings significantly simpler and now there are many online resources to help. Goldmine is just one of several offered by the leading studs to help breeders choose the right stallions for their mares. In the case of our six times winning mare Celestial Bay we were already looking for a stallion that reinforced her lineage to the great Seattle Slew, would not be too big and might also inject more speed. Whitsbury Stud's new stallion Due Diligence exactly

fitted the bill in all these respects and we were even more delighted when Goldmine identified a potential visit by Celestial Bay as a 20/20 mating. Such a mating occurs when a pattern has two or more Graded Stakes Winners with CSI values of above 20 indicating that its potential is excellent as there are at least two superior horses bred on very similar lines. In this case Goldmine identified that Agnes World, Librettist, Coup De Grace, Air Force Blue, Exceed And Excel, Danehill Dancer, Lost In The Fog and Anabaa Blue were all Group 1 winners with the same pattern. So no pressure on our lovely resulting colt Study The Stars who is predicted by Goldmine to appreciate 6 furlongs as a two-year-old and 10 furlongs at three!

Top marks for vets

Horses probably have more documentation relating to their identity than their owners as every foal has to be DNA tested within six weeks of birth, microchipped and all markings included in their passport. Vets face a real challenge, firstly managing to take blood from a wriggling foal who's closely guarded by an anxious and sometimes aggressive mare.

Firstly the mare wouldn't allow anyone, including us, in the box and her foal 'Pitstop' had a particularly thick and fluffy coat. Having managed to grab Delagoa Bay, Richard was able to tranquillise her allowing him to then catch the foal... easier said than done as it required four of us to catch her and restrain her and the mare who was still well aware of everything going on. Happily everything was completed safely for all concerned and it was only when Pitstop shed her foal coat that we saw she has a very thin ankle of white above a single rear hoof which had not only been concealed by fluff but also the deep bedding in the stable. Weatherbys, being the official keeper of The Stud Book and managing racing's integrity, required that the process of identification was repeated so that a new passport could be issued. It's all a very tricky and vets deserve full marks for coping with a process we really wish could be made much simpler.



The foal also has to be restrained to enable microchipping and finally the vet is expected to be able to identify all markings despite a fluffy foal coat that can conceal all sorts of things - including the ultimate colour should the youngster prove to turn grey. Even 'whorls' of hair and any other distinctive features of the coat must be carefully recorded. Our vet Richard faced a particular challenge with Delagoa Bay's foal.

Did you know?

All horses born in the southern hemisphere share the same birthday of August 1st.