

Fate of Thoroughbred horses in New Zealand after the yearling sales

Bolwell, C.F., Rogers, C.W., French, N. and Firth, E.C., Massey University, Institute of Veterinary, Animal and Biomedical Sciences, New Zealand; c.bolwell@massey.ac.nz

A previous analysis of the supply chain in New Zealand Thoroughbred racing highlighted the loss of horses from the industry, estimating 57% of horses failed to reach their full potential; 27% of racehorses were never registered with a trainer. As part of a wider longitudinal study, there was an opportunity to describe the fate of yearlings after the sales and the loss of horses that occurred at each stage from the stud farm to racing as a 2-year-old. As part of a larger prospective study, Thoroughbred horses born in 2007 were followed from the stud farm to the end of their 2-year-old racing season (31st July 2010). Official data extracts containing sales and racing data of all the horses in the 2007 foal crop were linked to the horses followed in the study population. To describe the fate of the yearlings after the sales, horses were categorised into five groups: (1) registered with a trainer at two years of age; (2) registered with a trainer at three, but not at two; (3) exported at two; (4) died; and (5) unknown. After the sales, the fate of most (53%; 333/627) horses in the study population was 'registered with a trainer at two years of age', 24% (151/627) were exported and the fate of 8% (49/627) was 'unknown'. The most common country of export was Australia (87%; 131/151), followed by 3% each going to Hong Kong, Korea and Singapore. Of the sales horses, 28% were exported compared to 9% of store horses, whilst 40% (92/231), 21% (39/189) and 10% (7/71) of horses catalogued for Premier, Select and Festival sales, respectively, were exported. The fate was 'unknown' was for 16% (22/137) of store horses and 13% (9/71) of horses catalogued in the Festival sale. The predominant fate of yearlings after the sales was registered with a trainer at two years of age. The fate of a group of horses remained 'unknown' at the end of the 2-year-old season, indicating that these horses had not entered the cohort of horses trialling or racing in that year.